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James R. Lowell,
Smith Professor in
Harvard University,
20 Feb. 1867.

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ATHENÄIS;

OR,

THE FIRST CRUSADE.

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ATHENÄIS;

OR,

THE FIRST CRUSADE.

BY

WILLIAM STIGAND.

LONDON:
EDWARD MOXON & CO., DOVER STREET.
1866.

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ERRATA.

Page	43,	stanza	CXX.	line 7, *for* "when," *read* "where."
,,	55,		CLVI.	line 5, *for* "on," *read* "fast."
,,	59,		I.	line 6, *for* "tidings," *read* "record."
,,	107,	,,	XX.	line 4, *for* "fled," *read* "sped."
,,	118,	,,	LIII.	line 9, *for* "maiden," *read* "youthful."
,,	125,	,,	LXXIV.	line 8, *for* "fled," *read* "sped."
,,	127,	,,	LXXIX.	line 6, *for* "crush'd," *read* "push'd."
				line 9, *for* "upwards," *read* "upward."
,,	137,	,,	CVIII.	line 2, *for* "centr'd," *read* "centred."
,,	188,	,,	CI.	line 2, *for* "sparkl'd," *read* "sparkled."
,,	214,	,,	III.	line 3, *for* "great," *read* "deep."

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ATHENÄIS;

OR, THE FIRST CRUSADE.

CANTO I.

ANTIOCH.

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CANTO I.

I.

O FAITH of Chivalry! 'neath Beauty's eyes
    Winning for Life a new heroic prime,
O lustrous depths of Syria's sapphire skies!
    O dreamful grace of palmy Eastern clime!
    And you, ye chronicles of antique time,
Emblazon'd tales of knightly lance and spur,
    And high soul'd Passion's royalty sublime,
Aid me to tell, how Christ's dear Sepulchre
Was won by Frankish sword from Moslem scimitar.

II.

Yet for His sake who died on Calvary,
    Pure Son of God, of blessed Virgin born,
Whose precious limbs were nail'd upon the tree,
    Between two felon thieves—whose head with thorn
    Was crown'd in mockery; whose side was torn
By the sharp Roman spear, man's soul to save—
    One Pilgrim more, though lesser worth adorn
His song, may pay fresh homage to the Grave,
For which died countless hosts of noble souls and brave.

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III.

For ah! few now think of that Hallow'd Spot,
And 'neath the hard mechanic Time's control
Its outrag'd Sanctity is all forgot;
Dimm'd is the Passion's glory, our life's goal
Is some close sty of comfort, and the whole
Of our desires are bounded by the shine
Of gaud and tinsel—and the dull, gross soul
Can barely comprehend the joy divine
Which made men yearn to die in Holy Palestine.

IV.

And cold lips mock at faith in that high Creed,
Which o'er the West, after the starless night
Of lawless violence and barbarian greed,
Beheld new visions rob'd in heavenly light,
Of Holiness, of Beauty, and of Right:
To these they kneel'd, all else they did contemn;
And at the lone voice of an Eremite,
Nations leapt forth—no home seem'd home to them,
While Paynim feet profan'd the babe of Bethlehem.

V.

Myriads arise as one at Faith's loud call;
Kings, peasants, lords, go forth on pilgrim way,
No earthly love restrains, no pains appal,
Castles they sell, and manors sign away;
The banners float, the ready coursers neigh,
The last dear kiss they take from lips ador'd,
Then join with swelling hearts the long array,
To free the land belovèd of our Lord,
And vindicate the Cross to Infidels abhorr'd.

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VI.

What numbers left their bones in every vale,
From Danube's banks to Idumæa's sand;
Of these Heaven keeps alone the wondrous tale.
Record is none of many a pilgrim band,
By friends deserted and by foes trepann'd,
Of agonies of hunger, heat, and drought,
Of wand'rings in despair thro' hostile land;
Of tortures keen by fiendish foemen wrought, [fraught.
And lives far worse than death with chains and slavery

VII.

Yet vast as were the woes endur'd and told
In hall and bow'r throughout the Christian West,
The heart of faith within them wax'd not cold,
But onward still with Cross and lance they prest:
Nor were they vain, the vows which they profess'd—
They mightiest empires into ruin shook,
The heathen of Christ's land they dispossess'd;
If weaker faith their glorious prize forsook,
Men will with shame in time to their ensample look.

VIII.

They made for us a new heroic age
On which Romance will ever fondly dwell,
Grander than aught in Time's recording page: [spell
They made the Sword serve Truth; their Valour's
Maintains its charm where'er they fought and fell;
Tho' Godfrey's sword, which shap'd for Christ a throne
Where not a Christian now dare sound a bell,
Is but as relic to the curious shown,
And Islam dreadless sits upon the victor's stone!

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IX.

Yet ne'er can dark-brain'd Asiatic horde—
Who Might, as symbol of the True, revere,
Whose doctrine is the Koràn and the sword—
Believe that Christians hold a faith sincere,
While Moslems o'er the Cross the Crescent rear
Within the city where the living God
Smote from the glory-cloud all hearts with fear;
Where saints and martyrs hallow every clod, [trod.
And where on Calvary's steep Christ's fainting footsteps

X.

For if wherever heroes liv'd and died,
Some sacred genius on the spot doth dwell,
Where'er pin'd victims of tyrannic pride,
A gentler reverence haunts the prison cell;
If where the blood of saintly martyrs fell,
A perfume still doth pray'r-like heav'nward climb,
And Earth's dumb stones do, like the ocean shell,
Keep murmurs of the surges of past time, [sublime:
Echoes of thought and deed which make life more

XI.

What memories, O Solyma! are thine,
Amid the ashes of thy voiceless woe?
Couch'd as thou liest on arid rocks supine,
While down thy channel'd cheeks the hot tears flow,
Or as thou tak'st thy wandering steps and slow
Round the void tombs of Prophet, Saint, and King,
Or through Jehoshaphat dost moaning go,
Or at thy Temple's ruin'd wall dost wring
Thy wither'd hands, and to its stones with wailing cling.

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XII.

With thee the Spouse of Christ oft veils her face
When on her form she Pilgrim garb hath set,
And through the Street of Sorrow seeks the trace
Of His last footsteps, where the stones were wet
With His dear agony and bloody sweat,
Where'er He stay'd His Cross, she weeps and prays:
Then, loathing shade of mosque and minaret,
Without the gates she hies by rugged ways,
To shield her aching eyes from day's distracting blaze.

XIII.

Beneath Gethsemane's tear-fed olive trees,
Within that sacred grot she maketh moan,
Where rocks seem still with clammy awe to freeze,
As though they witness'd aye the anguish lone
Of Christ when He withdrew e'en from His own
To pray: "Let, Father, this cup pass from me."
And there she sits till day's hot might hath flown,
Thinking on Him bound on accursèd tree,
And murmurs o'er each verse of Sacred Prophecy.

XIV.

Lone maid of Judah! oft her evening way,
Sighing, she takes o'er Olivet, and eyes
The Moab mountains molten in the ray
Of the ensanguin'd sun. The Dead Sea lies
A lake of blood beneath the crimson skies,
And o'er the desert sands to Jordan's bank
Adown the herbless hills she looks and cries,
"O Sodom and Gomorrah, when ye sank,
Brief were your woes, but mine for ages I have drank."

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XV.

And oft at midnight by Siloa's fount,
While as of yore Judæa's moon doth shine,
She sits at foot of Zion's Holy Mount,
And there she dreams of days of grace divine,
When her Jehovah dwelt within her Shrine,
And did her brow with His own crown enfold,
While through her proud gates stream'd in endless line,
The tribute-camels, incense, myrrh, and gold,
And kings before her feet their gifts and gems unroll'd.

XVI.

But from her dream she wakes with piteous sigh;
The foxes walk o'er Zion's sacred halls,
The gaunt hyæna whines, the jackals cry
Amid the whiten'd tombs without the walls,
The hooting owl to owl triumphant calls.
Nought else breaks through the quiet of the skies,
Till the Turk drum in barb'rous dissonance falls
Upon her shudd'ring ear, the Moueddhin cries
His doleful summons loud for Moslems at sunrise.

XVII.

When day descending lightens over all,
What tongue but thine, Isaiah, could declare
The desert-awe and silence, like a pall
Enshrouding every gorge and hillside there?
Beneath her yawns the chasm of Hinnom, bare
As smelted furnace-dross; no water slakes
The bed of Kidron in its stony glare;
And not one grasshopper the silence breaks,
As though all mute would be since God no longer speaks.

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XVIII.

And we might deem the angel's fiery brand
That smote Sennacherib's host had newly past,
Had riv'n the rocks and wither'd all the land,
Or that the dewless drought and desert-blast
Of dark Elijah aye was doom'd to last;
Her vineyards fair are chok'd with dust and stone,
And sere and sick the olive stands aghast,
As though just hence some locust tribe had flown,
And Desolation's salt on every side been sown.

XIX.

And 'neath the Bedawee's destroying spear
The peasant reaps his meagre sheaves of corn,
While still from time to time upon the ear
Are shrieks of massacre and havoc borne
From homeless crowds and orphan'd troops forlorn,
From Christian streets o'erwhelm'd in blood and flame,
Where Moslems still spit on the Cross in scorn,
And the Frank walks the Pharpar's banks in shame,
Since Europe shriv'd those fiends with indignation tame.

XX.

Yet, maid of Zion, in thy Holy Writ
Have faith; thy sorrow shall not endless be;
The city where Jehovah thron'd did sit,
Where Jesus wept, shall yet some mercy see,—
Now Athens is, and Rome shall soon be free.
Heav'n keeps redemption for each chosen race:
Ere long, O Zion! will He look on thee,—
The Holy Diadem on thy brows replace,
While nations at thy feet claim thy forgiving grace.

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XXI.

Then as the roaring lion from his lair
Amid the flags, when Jordan in his might
Ariseth, shall the heathen in despair
Abandon thee for ever; new delight
Shall come on nations gladd'ning in thy sight;
Thy deserts then as Sharon's rose shall bloom
Like Carmel cloth'd with flowers and fragrance bright,
And from the Holy of Holies and Christ's tomb
A glory new shall burst and earth and heav'n illume.

XXII.

O Muse of Holy prophecy, 'tis thou
Shouldst sing the coming marvels of her reign,
Of sceptred wrong and rapine's tow'rs brought low.
Yet may one still essay in modern strain
To tell of that emprise, when not in vain
Thy fervid accents rang, with life restor'd,
From Clermont's walls to Eastern, Western main,
Calling to arms against the nomad horde
Whose heathen rage laid waste the vineyard of the Lord.

XXIII.

For in true majesty of Prophet-mood
Stood Urban, Pontiff of Rome's Holy See,
Enthron'd on high before the multitude
Of Europe's chiefs and high-soul'd chivalry,
Waving before him like a gorgeous sea,
Whose strong, full hearts swell'd ever and anew
To his denouncing voice; till suddenly
The quenchless cries from each fir'd bosom flew—
"*Aïe! O Saint Sepulcre! aïe!*" and "*Diex lo veut.*"

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XXIV.

And then began the Iliad of the Cross,
A mightier than that elder, when prows hove
Full-arm'd in sight of island Tenedos.
Pass we the march: the plots Byzantium wove;
Chalcedon's tryst and camp; the hosts they drove
O'er Asian fields in panic's disarray;
Nicæa's walls they storm'd; then, fighting, clove
Up dark defiles of Taurus' desperate way,
Till round fair Antioch's gates their proud pavilions lay.

XXV.

Girt with four hundred tow'rs the city stood,
Seven months besieg'd by Europe's chivalry;
Full oft the swoll'n Orontes, red with blood,
Shoal'd Frank and Turkish corpses to the sea;
No deep ravine from bloodshed had been free
Round Syria's Queen of cities; each retreat
Of rose and jasmine and pomegranate tree,
Vines trampled deep and torn, bespoke the heat
With which fell Havoc there his armèd heels had beat.

XXVI.

The day was nearly spent, and all the West
Glow'd like a furnace with tempestuous fire
Impending o'er the world. In wild unrest,
The wide Levantine chaf'd with mad desire,
To feel the coming storm. Along from Tyre,
The red Sirocco, hot with Afric sands,
Blew stiflingly. Upon the topmost pyre
Of Antioch's citadel the Soldan stands
And twines his silver beard with passion-trembling hands.

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XXVII.

The Soldan Akhi Syan's eager sight
Was strain'd towards the East, beyond the ranks
Of gay pavilions of the Christian might;
His eyes were fix'd upon the utmost banks
Of poplar-fring'd Orontes, where the flanks
Of mountain-buttresses wedg'd in the stream;
And then he look'd on the encampèd Franks,
And his eyes brighten'd with malignant gleam.
"Another day," he said, "shall my long grief redeem.

XXVIII.

"They come not yet—but Oh! another day,
Or two at most—then, like the Euxine Sea,
Engulfing navies, in its stormful play,
Islàm shall whelm in one death agony
These curs of Europe—not one soul shall flee.
Come, Kerbogah, come bring the endless train,
Of Asia's horsemen. Allah! let me see
Thy Prophet's champions, thick as locust rain,
Or Lebanon's forest leaves, come scouring o'er the plain.

XXIX.

"My soul is mad for vengeance. O my child!
My best lov'd boy! whom an accursèd hound
Hew'd down before mine eyes, I will have pil'd
For thy dear memory upon the ground,
Where thou didst yield thy breath, a noble mound
Of sculls of Infidels—more broad and high,
Than is the Mosque of Omar." Fiercely round
The agèd Soldan swept his bloodshot eye, [sky.
And scann'd with anxious look the dark and threat'ning

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xxx.

With vulturous mien, knit brows, he gaz'd on high,
His beard, his turban's heron-plume, and vest,
Flutter'd within the fierce blast sweeping by.
"This storm, perhaps, one day more may arrest
Their onward march, and we are sore distrest
For bread. No matter—all is not yet spent."
Then turn'd he to descend, his white robes prest
Against the stony wall as down he went,
And sought with slipper'd feet the lower battlement.

xxxi.

He found a concourse on the fortress roof,
Spahi and Aga, Pasha, and Ameer,
In all the gorgeous broidery of woof,
Which looms could weave from Sidon to Cashmere;
The Bedawee leant on his reedy spear,
His white bournouz cowl'd round his visage brown,
Turbans of every hue, with emeralds clear
And egret plumes, great Sheiks of far renown,
The Toorkman, and the Kurd who pined within the town.

xxxii.

Debate was fierce among them: yet grew all
Mute at the Soldan's look; one, who was seen
To be most noble, by his turban's shawl
With pendent rubies fring'd and jewell'd sheen
Of ataghan and sabre sparkling keen,
Came forth and cross'd his arms and said; "My Lord,
Let thy slave speak to thee. This day have been
Strange rumours rife; of treachery abhorr'd
We fear the secret ways, but no man's open sword.

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XXXIII.

"The Christian dogs, with ill-dissembled joy,
Glare on us as they pass us in the street.
'Tis said too kindly Moseilama's boy
Our Frank besiegers do in camp entreat
As tho' no captive, but a hostage meet
For some dark treason, which the sire has sworn,
I know not—I the rumour'd fears repeat."
Then spoke the Soldan, with a look of scorn,
"Oh, cease your womanish dread, wait but to-morrow's [morn.

XXXIV.

"To-morrow eve, no hound before our wall
Shall live perchance, to vex us with his bark;
And yet, an if ye will, bid heralds call,
No Giaour abroad shall venture after dark,
On pain of death by torture in the sark
Of pitch and fire. Each hour let trumpets peal
From watch to watch; Azim, I'll set a mark,
To prove thy sword fame—Moseilama kneel,
And bend thy looks on me. Thou, Azim, bare thy steel.

XXXV.

"I think I know a traitor by the eyes.
Now, Azim, swing thy scimitar on high,
And sheer his crown oft as thou wouldst a fly's
If I but nod; an fail'st thou, I will try
The stroke on thee." With pitiless grey eye
The Soldan look'd on Moseilama's face—
A mask as deep as night to scrutiny—
As hard as sculptor's bronze—no eye could trace
One hue of change away its dark repose to chase.

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XXXVI.

Though thirty years and more had pass'd him by,
Still was there beauty in the livid hue
Of his sunk, swarthy cheeks; and in his eye
A jet of cold dark light; 'twas strange to view,
A man as calm as fate. "He must be true
To destiny and Islam. He were dead,
Had but an eye-lash quiver'd. Azim, do
Thy sword into its sheath," the Soldan said: [fled.
And then the Moueddhin's call proclaim'd that day had

XXXVII.

Unto the mosque below the faithful went,
Then to his separate post each chieftain sped
To set the night-watch. Moseilama bent
His step unto the southern gate, which led
Beneath the rampart, flank'd by tow'rs of red,
And Cyclopèan walls; into the night
Each crenellated summit rose in dread,
Precipitous, dark mass; an arrow's flight
From Tartar bow could scarce attain much loftier height.

XXXVIII.

This gate, and six more tow'rs within their ward,
Did Moseilama and his brother hold,
Armenian renegades, whom no regard
Of Christ or Mahomet sway'd more than gold.
In loathsome arts and fawning treachery bold,
To Paynim favor they had slowly crept,
Each in his bosom nurs'd suspicion cold,
Till now their counsel they together kept,
And oft had plotted crimes whilst others guileless slept.

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XXXIX.

Down by the gateway did the Turkish Guard,
Within the guardhouse, watch both night and day
The gates, which iron-jointed, iron-barr'd,
Twelve men could on their hinges scarcely sway.
A moment there did Moseilama stay,
And then he mounted through a circling stair.
With breathless haste he trod the weary way,
Until at last he reach'd a platform bare
Which on the tow'r's lone height was spread in upper air.

XL.

The tempest roar'd against the parapet,
From which he peer'd into the dark profound;
"The signal-fires," he cried, "are duly set.
I know that nought could Bohemond astound,
Though, with this storm, Hell's fiends were all un-
Here Moseilama felt upon his arm [bound."
An unexpected grasp. With startled sound
He leapt back, but a voice said, "Fear no harm;
Why should a brother's hand thy soul so much alarm?

XLI.

"Ah! conscience, brother, hath a stinging goad.
Why is thy boy with yonder host? I know
To-day a camel bore a precious load,
Within the gate here, from the Frankish foe.
Thou know'st how well I love the golden glow,
Of bezants and of sequins. 'Twas not kind
To hide thy purpose thus; I've seen thee go
Beyond the walls the Frankish Chiefs to find,
And twice with Bohemond in commune deep combin'd."

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XLII.

Then Moseilama made an answer smooth:
"Brother! I swore our counsel should remain
A secret e'en from thee. But now in truth
My tongue is free, and all shall be made plain;
For, brother, I forget no care or pain
Which to an orphan'd boy thou didst display,
When thou, by years the elder of us twain,
At Erzroum fed my youth with pleasure gay,
Where joyously we spent what law made not its prey.

XLIII.

"The precepts of thy love have prosper'd well:
Here stand we high, though each a Renegade,
And each Fedai of the Sheik Aldjebel.
Know, then, by his dread will a plot is laid
To let the Franks mount here by escalade:
Be sure, no part shall fail thee of thy due
And of the love I owe thee." Here he laid
Grasp on his brother's arm, his dagger drew [through.
And struck him in the throat, and pierc'd the windpipe

XLIV.

The felon-hand could not repeat the stroke.
The wounded man dash'd from its demon clasp,
And though with blood his breath began to choke,
Unsheath'd his sword with desperation's grasp;
Awhile their blades together clink and rasp,
Till Moseilama dealt a deadlier blow.
His brother fell, then shook with gory gasp,
Then writh'd beneath the strong hand of his foe,
Who dragg'd him to the wall to push him thence below.

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XLV.

The death-struck man clutch'd, with convulsive spasm,
His nails into the outward coping-stone,
And ground his knees against the outward chasm,
Then fell into the night without a groan.
Already has the caitiff downwards flown,
And traitor light from arrow-loop display'd;
And then he drew aloft, with labour lone,
A ladder, in dark nook securely laid,
Of knotted bullock's hide, which he himself had made.

XLVI.

One end around a battlement he ran,
Then cast its coil'd length down the darksome steep.
The Moslem had sure deem'd no thought of man
Could ev'n in dream dare up those tow'rs to creep,
Whose vast tiara, horrible and deep,
Girt round the city; on the walls and gates
Below, the guards their constant vigils keep,
But, there alone the impatient caitiff waits,
While his fell heart by turns, fear freezes, joy dilates.

XLVII.

From heathen Turk and renegade, my song,
Haste thee away unto the Red Cross Knight.
I fear me, thou hast linger'd yet too long
With such a miscreant dark, and Paynim night.
Ah! could but Memory lend thee of her light,
And Fancy bear thee up on airy wing
To her enchanted realms of dear delight,
And antique fervour some strong numbers bring, [ring.
Then shouldst thou here indeed with mightier echoes

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XLVIII.

Deep as Ulysses, in unwearied guile,
Was Bohemond Guiscard's true progeny,
Lord of Tarentum; in his polish'd smile,
Lurk'd demon-hatred oft, cold, haughty, sly,
His very wrath was well-thought policy,—
Strong with his lance, and stronger in debate,
Vengeance he lov'd, but more prosperity;
All were his foes, whose wealth could raise his hate,—
Nor awe of God or man his purpose could abate.

XLIX.

The meanest plans could Bohemond pursue,
Yet ne'er let stoop his outward dignity;
A calm ferocity was in the blue
Of his large eyes; chicane and treachery
With ostentatious frankness would he ply;
Mock virtues he at others' cost display'd;
His pious pretexts all one selfish lie;
So studious e'er fair phrases to parade;
Most worldly wise he was of all the first crusade.

L.

The simple to beguile—the false to bribe—
To be his partizans he daily strove;
He was true scion of the Norman tribe,
Which then as e'er by force and cunning throve,
By lance of steel, and that which Judas drove
Into the side of Christ—hypocrisy.
Robert Guiscard, old Norman fox, did prove
His foresight, when he left him without fee; [be.
Such craft and strength, he thought, will not long landless

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LI.

So lance, shield, hauberk, battle-steed, were all
He own'd, when with his brother's host he fought,
Where Malfi's old machicolated wall
Rose from the Tyrrhene sea; there news was brought
That Christendom to holy frenzy wrought
At Clermont's Council had the Cross put on,
And in embattled lines the Orient sought.
Straightway he dream'd of fiefs and kingdoms won,
And heaps of palace-spoil beneath the eastern sun.

LII.

Than Bohemond, in simulated zeal,
The Pontiff hardly was less eloquent—
Around him crowds of knights in linked steel,
From Puglia, Sicily, Calabria, went
To beg a cross from his red surcoat rent;
Scouring through Macedon, with robber law,
Before Alexis' throne he proudly bent;
The crafty Greeks, with fascinated awe,
Their master in deceit a proud barbarian saw.

LIII.

Him soon th' Armenian renegade had seen,
To be a man for his dark purpose meet;
And then those twain devis'd with ardour keen,
To rear in Antioch a regal seat.
But the Franks scorn'd his bargain of deceit.
"What," cried they, "by the blood of them who died
At Nice and Dorylæum, frost and heat,
Hunger and death, have we so long defied,
That Antioch may be thine, to glut thy Norman pride?"

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LIV.

And so disunion thus the chieftains kept.
The Renegade, with Bohemond had plann'd
No other price for treason to accept.
At length fame ran, a host as Libyan sand
Innumerous, from every Asian land,
Whom Killidj Arslan, Lion Chief of Roum,
And Kerbogah, Prince of Mussoul, command,
Were but a day's march distant. In the gloom
Of such ill news the Franks then yield them to their doom.

LV.

So at the latest hour accord was made
That Bohemond of Antioch should be king,
Since so alone would that dark Renegade
Unfold by what hid means he meant to bring
The Franks within th' unbroken rampart's ring;
And when he told them, that each knight must stride
Up that blank tow'r, they laugh'd—"An eagle's wing,
He must likewise," they said, "for each provide; [tried."
Yet what man's courage may, by Christ's help, shall be

LVI.

A hundred knights of choicest chivalry
Came willing forth to dare the path of fear;
Before God's altar, meekly on the knee,
They pray'd to Jesus and his Mother dear,
That Grace divine that night might them be near.
That stormy night, all met in Godfrey's tent,
The altar blaz'd, the Litany rang clear,
The tent folds strain'd—the tent poles creak'd and bent,
While these Crusaders took the blessèd Sacrament.

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LVII.

To them, thus strengthen'd by the holy rite,
Rose good Duke Godfrey, in his lion mien,
And said, "My sons, your valor is this night
The shield of Christendom. In faith serene
I send you forth; from Saracens unclean,
Go free the tomb of Christ; for Paradise
Reap with your swords a garland evergreen—
Go, up yon tow'r the road to Salem lies;
The host shall get to arms to second your emprize."

LVIII.

He ended, and with clash of mail and shield
The knights arose and troop'd forth, pair by pair;
Sudden the circuit vast of tentèd field
Was flash'd from out the dark by livid glare
Of sight-benumbing lightning; earth and air
Trembled like leaves beneath the thunder's throes,
Mute tremor seiz'd each beast in mountain lair;
The guilty soul with icy horror froze;
Nor were the dead unmov'd in their eterne repose.

LIX.

From crag to crag above the cedar'd steeps
Of Cassius and Amanus, offspurs vast
Of snowy Lebanon, the thunder leaps,
Then through the solid darkness headlong cast
The skyey cataracts sweep down the blast,
Smiting the earth with deluge; then there flew
In sightless splendour livid lightnings fast
Athwart the storm in blinding chasms of blue,
And earth, with peal on peal, was thunder-riven anew.

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LX.

"God is with us," a voice said, "fear no ill,
So shall we reach unseen the rampart's bound;"
All mutter'd "*Diex lo veut!*" in accents still,
And onward press'd. Oft on the wet, steep ground,
The mail'd foot slipp'd; torrents, with rushing sound,
Roar'd angry where but now the soil was bare,
And foam'd about their knees; sometimes around
Known marks would greet them in the lightning's glare,
Or they their way had miss'd amid the rayless air.

LXI.

Up the last steep each heart beat pauselessly;
When to the Armenian caitiff's tow'r they came,
The ladder in the wind was swinging free.
One stumbled o'er a corpse, the batter'd frame
Of Moseilama's brother. With secret flame,
On high the beacon burn'd; no word was spoke,
The only fear they had they did not name—
The fear of traitor's treason; yet to look
Each tried on th' other's face, and his arm silent took.

LXII.

A moment thus they paus'd; before them all
Stept Robert, Count of Flanders, nobler none,
Whom Sword and Lance of Christendom did call
The first Crusaders; so his valour shone;
The lion of his blazon'd shield was thrown
Down backwards from his neck; he grasp'd aright
The ladder with both hands. With falt'ring tone
He, turning, said, "If aught adverse this night
Befall me, first I pray Christ's mercy infinite.

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LXIII.

"And then to you, companions dear, I pray,
    If one of you shall reach my fair countrie,
Fail not to seek my castle at Yprès,
    And Clemence, my sweet wedded wife to see;
    I pray ye say I ended worthily,
With love of Christ and her upon my tongue,
    And of the boys who clamber'd on her knee."
Three steps he mounted up, when he felt flung
Two arms about his waist, a young knight to him clung.

LXIV.

Foucher de Chartres, an orphan he, who cried,
    "Dear Lord, ah, let me first, I pray thee, go;
And if I die, it little recks; more tried,
    And temper'd knights than I are here, I trow,
    But O! than thee no better earth can know;
Nor wife, nor child, dear Count, will weep my fall."
    "Ah!" cried a third, light leaping from below,
"'Tis I will stand the first on Paynim wall." [d'Aureval."
"*Dam Diex!*" Count Robert sigh'd—"'Tis Bertrand

LXV.

Count Bertrand d'Aureval was born within
    The shadow of the Pyrenees. His feet
E'en as a child, their steady way would win
    To eagle-haunted peaks. No breathless feat
    Of nerve or sinew stay'd him, when the fleet
Hoofs of the ibex or the izzard fled
    O'er chasm or glacier rift, or icy sheet;
And yet no course more terrible or dread
Had Bertrand's feet e'er held than that which now he led.

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LXVI.

Three times he paus'd amid the rain and wind
    Which his broad shield behind with fury took,
And ground him on the wall, then through his mind,
    The saintly calm of his lone mother's look,
    The pleasant hours beguil'd with poet-book,
The gazings from his draw-bridge on the foam
    Of the impetuous Gave, the pleasant nook,
Where lurk'd the speckled trout, thoughts of dear home,
And one surpassing face, involuntary roam.

LXVII.

Now kneel'd he on the summit, when a stroke
    Of lightning, like the avenging sword of God
Brandish'd across the firmament, awoke
    Again the volleying thunders; like a rod
    Quiver'd the firm-set tow'r; one step he trod
Again adown the abyss; his eye-sight blurr'd
    Clear'd in a moment, then aloft he strode,
Full glad the Armenian's voice alone he heard,— [third.
Young Foucher leapt up soon, then good Count Robert

LXVIII.

Count Robert's noble heart yearn'd to his peers;
    Both he embrac'd, and kiss'd both on the cheek,
And could they see, his eyes are moist with tears,
    While trembling lips fraternal words would speak.
    Next Tancred, as Achilles brave, and meek
As John the Evangelist, Christ's Champion he;
    Then Bohemond against the tempest bleak,
Leapt from the wall, next Drohon de Monci,
Then Eustace de Bouillon, then Hugues de Monthleri.

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LXIX.

As the Norwegian fowler mounts the rock,
Amid the screams of osprey and sea-mew,
Grasping a cord poised o'er the deep sea-shock,
And creamy surge-foam of the Ocean blue,
So came they; one by one their number grew
Three score and four, when a low with'ring yell,
Was heard above the storm, the strands in two
Had burst in mid ascent: three barons fell, [mell.
And crush'd two more below—one bleeding heap pell-

LXX.

A fourth knight was left pendant by the hands;
Unhappy youth, Gislebert of Lorraine;
Beneath his waist had broke the ladder's strands,
He writhed and wrung one foot of height to gain,—
His mailèd weight made half-won effort vain.
Soon shook his sinewy arms, his legs like lead
Weigh'd helpless down, his hot breath came with pain,
He felt the skin creep on his face and head, [sped.
His hands gave way, he gasp'd on Christ and downward

LXXI.

Like some few shipwreck'd men arriv'd on shore
Of savage isle, who see where they past by
Their comrades perish in the breakers' roar,
So joy and anguish and anxiety,
Possest the knights upon the rampart high,
Thus lone cut off; but the Armenian said,
"We are enough to slay the guard and ply
The gates from off their hinges, with the aid
Of axe and batt'ringbeam, and night's most friendly shade."

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LXXII.

Meanwhile, deep trouble sway'd Duke Godfrey's soul;
Though not yet chosen chief, yet all would fain
Serve him whom wisdom mark'd for high control;
In counsel calm, a storm in battle plain,
Grand in aspèct as royal Charlemagne,
From whom he sprung, his piety and zeal
And sweet humility, in deep disdain
Held empire, glory and all wordly weal,
And never but for Christ flash'd his resistless steel.

LXXIII.

But now De Bouillon's soul was trouble-sway'd,
The knights devoted to this great emprize,
So dear he lov'd, so anxiously he weigh'd
Each chance of treachery, failure, and surprise;
The night was hastening; soon the eastern skies
To purple brighten'd, as with sullen rear
The storm retreated, when in breathless wise
A knight came striding in with news of fear,—
"Alas!" duke Godfrey cried, "alas! my children dear.

LXXIV.

"I fear me, ah! I fear me for the worst:
Diex! what confusion seiz'd me—O that I
Could e'er give credence to that knave accurs'd.
Hither, two trusty squires, go quickly fly,
Thou to my good knights of Lorraine hard by,
Say I would have a score of pennons straight,
Unto our brothers' aid at once to hie.
Thou go to Raymond, say he must await
The dawn in arms with eyes intent on Southern Gate."

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LXXV.

Still slept th' unconscious city, while up-drawn
The Christian host outwatch'd the flying night,
Erect with expectation; in the dawn,
The city tow'rs came struggling into light
Against the faint-starr'd blue; in plume of white,
Count Raymond of Toulouse impatient stays
His bay destrier, girt round with many a knight
Of Chivalry of Provence; glist'ring blaze
Their gorgeous arms within the first faint morning rays.

LXXVI.

Sudden the host upsent an awful cry,
Sonorous throats of clangorous trumpets shook
Each brain to madness. Raymond raised on high
His blazon'd gonfanon, and madly strook
His spurs up to the rowels. The wild Duke
Robert Curthose yell'd "*À moi! Normandie!*"
Great Hugh de Vermandois cried "*Volt-de-Luc!*
À moi! Chevaliers Francs!" Like one wild sea,
Their gay plumes foam'd and flash'd and dash'd in rivalry.

LXXVII.

The fever'd soldier, from his bed of pain
Sprung to the tent door in wild ecstasy;
Gloria in excelsis Deo, fill'd the plain
From crowds of priests and women, as they see
Two well-known Ensigns from the walls float free,—
On argent field blaz'd Godfrey's Dragon red,
And Bohemond's Gold-cross in rivalry
Burn'd from the nearest tow'rs; with rushing tread
Went myriads to the gate, which was wide open spread.

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LXXVIII.

Of arms, and hoofs, and men the clamorous fear
Burst like a tempest on the Moslems' rest;
The warrior o'er his pillow grasp'd the spear;
The Syrian mother clasp'd unto her breast
Her frighten'd child. Soft maids, from downy nest,
Leapt up like startled fawns, not knowing where
To rush, with trembling knees; while close they prest
Their palms about their ears and tangled hair; [there.
Such cries and shock of steel and trampling hosts were

LXXIX.

But now the Moslem turns him like a boar
In forest lair surpris'd; one mighty cry
Of "*Allah! Allah!*" rose with awful roar.
From the remotest spaces of the sky
The wingèd fiends of Havoc haste and fly.
Gaunt Carnage licks her black, parch'd lips, and shakes
Her serpent locks; in horrid sympathy
Curl the live tangles of her hair of snakes—
Hell's lowest depths are stirr'd, and Mercy earth forsakes.

LXXX.

Panic and anguish, death in diverse form,
From myriad throats in hellish discord broke;
The clash of iron-mail, the ringing storm
Of jav'lins and of darts, the hiss and smoke
Of quenchless, sulphurous fire—the thrust and
The clash of shields—the brazen trumpet's blare [stroke—
Hound on the rage which doomèd men provoke,
Whose only hope is in their lorn despair.
All crimson looms the sun's great orb in turbid air.

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LXXXI.

Two days the roar of battle shook the town, [shade
While foot by foot they fought; scattering night's
The flames of blazing palaces shone down
On streets of men in combat; undismay'd
As stands the wild bull, from the arid glade
Of lone Sierra brought, amid his foes,
And never slacks his fury till the blade
Of Spanish swordsman to his heart's core goes;
So hurl'd defiance still the Moslem's last death-throes.

LXXXII.

The Soldan's palace still the Paynim kept;
It stood upon a hill, from whose broad crest
The eye o'er mosque, tow'r, dome, and palace swept;
Behind, the citadel close o'er it prest
More lofty rose. Its gorgeous front possest
One side of a vast square; long colonnades
Of fluted marble did curv'd space invest,
And sprang from either flank. There once array'd,
Stood trophies of Greek art, and still some fountains play'd.

LXXXIII.

Here form'd the Moslem, after ceaseless rout,
One last firm front against the madden'd foe;
The roofs and windows were all black about
With archers thick as bees; and fast as snow,
From Turkish, Bactrian, and Tartar bow,
The steely showers came dark'ning through the sky.
The foot battalions were deep rank'd below,
Flank'd by thick squares of Asian Cavalry,
Which ever and anon charg'd forth with "*Tecbir*" cry.

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LXXXIV.

And all unmov'd, as stands some mighty alp,
Around whose pine-clad steeps thick tempests [sweep,
And break their thunders on its snowy scalp,
So stood the Moslem; while from many a heap
Of mangled comrades, the warm blood ran deep,
And tripp'd the swordsman as he struck amain.
Onward the Franks, in wedge of battle, keep
Their ghastly path o'er mounds of mangled slain, [brain.
O'er quiv'ring trunks, gash'd breasts, heads cloven thro' the

LXXXV.

Though axe and sword, for very weariness,
The Frank could scarcely clasp; yet frenzy still
Seem'd in each arm to strike. O'er all the press
Now rose a war-cry, horrid, vast, and shrill;
Then first the Paynim courage waxèd chill;
Less dread, less terrible, and loud the yell,
With which foul troops of jackals nightly fill
The air of plague-smit cities. Ah! full well
The Tafùr's wild war-whoop, each Saracen would tell.

LXXXVI.

The Tafùrs press their way up from the rear,
Rending all ears with their funereal scream;
The Frankish soldiers laugh to see white fear
Come o'er the Turkish host, and let a stream
Of gaunt burnt demons, scarr'd with many a seam,
Pass through them to the front. Their shaggy vest
The motley savage herd did well beseem;
Some skins of beasts, some ragged sack-cloth drest; [breast.
Half naked, some show'd bare, brown knotted arms and

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LXXXVII.

They were the lowest rabblement and lees,
From every nook and wild of Europe sent;
Cave-dwellers, serfs, outlaws of all degrees,
Camp-followers to the Christian armament.
Their arms were Danish axes, knives, bills bent,
Great reaping-hooks, and scythes, clubs spikèd o'er,
Stakes black with fire. On naked feet they went,
Their hair all wild about their heads they wore,
Some lank like horses' manes, some bristled like the boar.

LXXXVIII.

Their fierce aspèct and horrid deeds made reign
Report among the Turks that ghastly food
They carved from out the trunks of Moslem slain.
Their chief, nam'd King Tafûr, a cubit stood
Above the rest in stature; a grim hood,
A tusk'd boar's head for helmet did he wear,
Whose sight unclean made chill the Paynim's [blood;
His red wild locks and beard stream'd in the air;
A boar's hide girt his bust, right-arm and shoulder bare.

LXXXIX.

Such was the chief that grisly troop obey'd.
Tall as a tent pole was his knotted spear,
Arm'd with a scythe's broad double-edgèd blade;
This shook the Goth aloft, and gnashing drear
His tuskèd teeth, he led, in swift career,
His hosts into mid-battle; there he mow'd
Whole ranks off by the knees, in circles clear.
The Paynim fled, while on the giant strode,
Until the Tartar horse into the turmoil rode.

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XC.

A Tartar, huge of limb, with visage swart,
At King Tafùr his giant courser drove,
Who swung his scythe aloft; with dext'rous art
The Tartar caught the great shaft as it clove
The air within his arm, then deftly hove
His mace aloft to strike, as swift as light:
Then Tafùr's end had come; in vain he strove
His shaft to loosen, when a plumèd knight
Dash'd in with sword athwart,—the mace fell idly quite.

XCI.

'Twas Bertrand d'Aureval, who with two score
Of Golden Knights of Provence join'd the fray;
Tancred was with him. The huge Tartar swore,
And spurr'd and tore Tafùr's great spear away,
And hurl'd his mace at his retreating prey;
Then flash'd his damask'd scimitar, he swept
The curvèd blade around with light'ning play;
His foaming steed in wheels and curvets leapt,
While Bertrand e'er to him his sword-point turning kept.

XCII.

Count Bertrand had his visor up bedight,
His face was bright and radiant as the day,
The Paynim's dark and terrible as night;
The one with pure delib'rate valour gay,
The other like the dark Simoom-sun's ray
All heat and fury. Bertrand fair to see
As Michael, when th' Archangel met in fray
Dark-visag'd Satan, breath'd the harmony
Of some sublime intent from passion's darkness free.

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XCIII.

As swoops the vulture round the hornèd deer,
So wheel'd the Tartar. With a yell he sprung,
And thrice charg'd D'Aureval; his falchion clear,
With dext'rous aim, he marvellously flung, [rung,
Twice on Count Bertrand's shield the steel blade
Once from his casque the jewell'd plume was slash'd.
They clos'd again, again the Paynim swung
His scimitar on high; then Bertrand dash'd [flash'd.
His shield to take the blow. His sword like lightning

XCIV.

His foe's right arm beyond his shield emboss'd
He caught, and off the bony hand he slew.
The idle blade upon the ground was toss'd,
By quivering fingers grasp'd; of ashy hue
In wrathful impotence the Paynim grew;
His white teeth ghastly grinn'd; about he slung
His orbèd targe in vain. Till Bertrand threw
His straight point o'er his breast-plate, chest and lung
He pierc'd to the back-bone—awhile the monster clung:

XCV.

A moment yet, he rais'd his haughty crest,
Then as some rock falls headlong in the tide,
So fell the Tartar. On the Tafùr prest—
On prest the Frankish foot; on every side
The Moslem turn'd and fled. Then Tancred cried—
"Up to the gate, dear friend; see, by the gate
The Paynims find retreat; swift let us ride
And cut them off. Behind a path seeks straight
The citadel, and thence they can defy our hate."

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XCVI.

Then from his squire a fresh lance took each knight,
And set it up in rest. With heads bent low,
And side by side they spurr'd into the fight.
A Toorkman squadron cover'd up the foe
In fast retreat. Like arrow from a bow,
Count Bertrand dash'd against the chief, and hit
His targe against his breast; in instant throw
The Moslem flew from off his seat and lit
Three lances' lengths behind in stunn'd and senseless fit.

XCVII.

Again Count Bertrand spurr'd; beneath the cheek
His lance was driven into a Toorkman's brain;
Then wheeling round again he charg'd a Sheik, [vane
And run him through and through. His pennon's
A foot behind his foe was waving plain;
The lance held fast; his sword again he took
And look'd for Tancred, whose lance too had slain
Three Paynims, when the shaft in shivers broke;
With Bertrand then abreast, his sword aloft he shook.

XCVIII.

Like two twin bolts of war into the press
Then went they side by side, and thick and fast
The slain fell all around; yet not the less
The Turks retreated through the gates. At last
Some few alone were left, the gates were cast
Together with a clash, and barr'd inside;
Like some lone band of pines before the blast
Of fierce tornado, fell the Turks outside; [tide.
Close to the walls the Franks dash'd up their crested

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XCIX.

First flew awhile the arrows from above,
Then ceas'd. Some time the massive bronzèd gate
Delay'd the Christians. Till with beams they hove
The mighty valves asunder: desolate
And silent was the space! all hot with hate,
Raging for blood, through empty courts and ways,
O'er stairs and galleries, and great halls of state,
Burst the wild rabble, who, bewilder'd, gaze
On Grecian walls o'erlaid with Saracenic blaze.

C.

Within the palace was a wondrous hall,
Which Arab art had deck'd at priceless cost:
With onyx marbles shone gold-column'd wall;
The roof had arches fretted as with frost
Of golden stalactites; 'neath dome emboss'd
And honeycomb'd in gold, a dais wide
Upbore a throne, beside which lions cross'd
Their paws in gold and watch'd carbuncle-eyed,
With carv'd and jewell'd work o'erarch'd and canopied.

CI.

Entering the hall along the glittering floor,
The Tafûrs burst—that rabble wild and dread—
Their mighty chief his tuskèd helmet bore
Aloft above his troop, which rolling spread
Its ranks within the hall. The silvery head
Of a red porphyry font first caught their gaze,
Then burst that throne in glory islanded,
Like sunset-cloud fringe-lit with rubied blaze,
And female forms they saw thereon with still amaze.

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CII.

Thereto they rush'd with greedy wrath afire;
But as the Lion at fair Una's feet
Forgot his angry strength and mad desire;
While Truth and Beauty, with communion sweet,
To adoration turn'd his bloody heat;
So in mute awe, they view'd a form who sate
In such imperial beauty as may greet
Th' impassion'd dreams of artists, who create
Such splendors, as uplift the soul from mortal state.

CIII.

Like to some Eastern sibyl from the hues
Of Raphael's fancy warm; some fairy queen—
Titania, Gloriana, or some Muse
Or Pallas hewn from out the stainless sheen
Of Parian stone, which show'd its face serene
At some great feast of Athens first laid bare,—
So fair a form sat there, with fearless mien;
Two maids about her knees crouch'd in despair;
One hid her face, one spread her suppliant arms i' th' air.

CIV.

A leopard at her feet lay couch'd, who rose
Before the crowd, and stood and gazed a space,
Then laid his silken throat in fond repose
Upon her knee, and look'd up in her face;
Above her snow-white brow, the flashing grace
Of one great emerald lighten'd from her hair
In splendour like the star, whose constant rays
Beam from the front of Dawn, when not more fair,
Than that bright form, she treads serene the orient air.

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CV.

While yet mute wonder held the crowd aloof,
Count Bertrand d'Aureval dash'd in between.
Ah! never in the bright ethereal woof
Of dreams by starlight, when the vines were green,
And breezes nightlong danc'd with ardour keen
On wavy wreaths, which swung from tree to tree,
Had Bertrand felt a joy so unforeseen,
As this which did through heart and senses flee,
In flash of wild surprise and dreamless ecstasy.

CVI.

He thrust unto the front, and call'd aloud—
"He dies who does but on her raiment's hem
Lay once a ruffian hand. Back, caitiff crowd,
A Christian lady this of noblest stem,
From Byzant!" Such her jewell'd anadem,
Gold carcanet and cross; the Ionic fold
Of her deep zonèd garb, the claspèd gem
Which crown'd her grand, white shoulder, as well told
As the calm, lustrous brow and face of classic mould.

CVII.

That queenly beauty first he did espy,
At the Byzantine Court, whose state outdid
The pomp of Ind and Persia. He stood nigh
Count Raymond, when together they were bid
To do the yielded homage; there amid
The languid and interminable flow
Of gilded and grand titulars, who slid
With much prostration and observance slow,
They staid to play their part in that unmeaning show.

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CVIII.

And as they jested there within the dread
Cæsarean presence, at the slavish throng,
Who kiss'd th' imperial buskin, Raymond said—
"Here comes the Princess Anna, who loves song,
And wooes th' historic Muse. See too, along
With her comes she of whom but now I spake,
The Princess Athenäis, fit among
Her land's ideals sov'ran place to take, [sake."
And East and West once more to arm for beauty's

CIX.

Then Bertrand look'd and saw that royal pair
Draw to a golden seat, a little space
Below th' imperial throne; the queenly air
Of Athenäis, her Junonian grace
Drew many an eye towards her perfect face:
She look'd upon the Frank chiefs with a smile
As they advanc'd with scarce conceal'd grimace
To the imperial feet: for all the while
She knew they deem'd their knees such homage did defile.

CX.

Like to a Hindoo idol swath'd in gold,
Alexis scarce could bend his mitred head,
So stiff did gems and pearls his face enfold.
"Ah! Heav'n be thank'd, 'tis over," Raymond said:
"But see the Princess—ah; 'tis well I'm wed,
And do the frosts of fifty winters bear
Within my blood, or by the Holy shed,
Dropt at Loretto, I would hardly care [stars there.
To place my heart within the range of those blue load-

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CXI.

"Ah! Bertrand, had ye heard her yester-eve
As I did, singing, a sweet Provence lay,—
By'r Lady, now they see me. By your leave,
Fair Sir. Come, Bertrand—follow me this way,
We surely hurt not ceremony to obey
The young princesses' greeting. They said too,
They gladly would of our Provençals gay
See some few nobles; 'of your barbarous crew
The least barbarian,' said they smiling, 'I bring you.'"

CXII.

Thus Bertrand first did Athenäis know,
And while the vast Crusade together grew
Beside the Bosphorus in ceaseless flow,
Again, and yet again, the young Frank drew
From that fair form deep draughts of passion new,
Which fill'd his soul as wildly as the light
Smites on the brain of him whom dungeon-dew
And darkness long have compass'd, till one night
He trod a joy new-born on Love's ecstatic height.

CXIII.

For all the Court had left its palace-home,
And on the Golden Horn held revelry;
Each orb and crescent on th' imperial dome
Flash'd in the pale moon-beam. The dark blue sea,
All prankt with steady stars, mov'd languidly,
Before the carv'd gilt barque, whence level glows
From lamps like colour'd moons, gleam'd glassily;
The oars suspended fell, and softly rose,
With song and music round to chime in cadenc'd close.

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CXIV.

And many a palace from the gleaming wave,
With all its columns trembled up again.
It was a sight well fitted to make rave,
Than Bertrand d'Aureval's, an older brain;
For he had been among the Moors of Spain;
At Cordova, as student, well had known
The arts and wonders of the Arab reign;
And shared in many a pageant which outshone [throne.
The splendors which flow'd round Haroun Alraschid's

CXV.

There are some moments when a man can say,
"Now, Sorrow, I defy thee—this my joy,
Must in me live, unto my latest day."
And so it was with Bertrand—no alloy
There was his perfect happiness to cloy,
For in the barque, which fifty oarsmen drew,
He sat with Athenäis; the same coy
And wav'ring breezes round their temples blew,
And light from lip to lip, song, smile and fancy flew.

CXVI.

Like to a guiding spirit, with crown'd brow,
Aloft sat Athenäis, on each hand
Fair groups of maidens, facing to the prow.
Count Raymond too was there; in radiance bland
Glow'd the fair faces of that roseate band:
One soft, voluptuous light enspher'd the barque;
Then while the echoes died along the land,
With their sweet singing, Raymond cried, "O hark, [dark.
How night repeats the tones through all her amorous

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CXVII.

"Ah! Princess, all the halting poets feign,
Of planetary music, scarce could please,
After these rapturous concords! sing again,
I pray, the Trojan captive's song. O breeze—
Sea breeze—come quit the blue Symplegades,
Or else that hymn, which Sappho, ere she leapt,
Sang to wild Love across Leucadian seas."
"Nay, nay," said Athenäis, "ye have slept, [swept."
For not one hand has yet the Provence lute-strings

CXVIII.

Then Raymond said, "Count Bertrand here will sing;
For 'mid our Provence Troubadours his hand
Has the most exquisite cunning. He can string
His rhymes so sweetly, that in our dear land
The maidens round the fountains, as they stand,
And as they spin within the orchard close,
Do love to chaunt his virelays; the tann'd
Vine-dresser sings them when his vines he hoes,
And when the purple grapes in autumn's vats he throws.

CXIX.

"And he has made of chivalry such strains
As knights and ladies love." Then Bertrand sang
Far other notes than soft Byzantine swains
Were wont to marvel at. His clear voice rang
Like to a silver clarion's thrilling clang;
And every ear, with ever fresh delight,
Upon his strains did passionately hang—
Strains woven of those pure beams, whose dawning light
Of ages long and dark had burst the spectral night.

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CXX.

For then afresh unto th' abandon'd earth,
From the Eternal mind came gleams of Truth,
And from the darken'd heavens, in joyful birth,
Flash'd Love and Poesy; and Faith and Youth
And Valor led the giant forms uncouth
Of Force and Rapine chain'd to Beauty's feet,
When radiant eyes were dimm'd with tenderest ruth,
That she alone must pine in castle seat, [meet.
While her dear knights went forth her miscreant foes to

CXXI.

And like some silvery and delightful stream,
Born on the breezy crest of some fair hill,
Which, drinking first the morning's golden beam,
Down wood, and croft, and vineyard, does fulfil
Its pauseless way most musically, till
It flows in solemn calm of eve below;
So Bertrand's soul did rapturously thrill,
Bounding and brightening in that age's glow,
For all its glorious light in him did overflow.

CXXII.

And as the voice is to the human thought,
So Bertrand's poet-heart was but as flute
Of Memnon, whence the dawning epoch wrought
Sweet melodies, whose wingèd seeds took root,
And blossom'd forth in souls, which else all mute
Had stood before the awful unseen Power,
Who on the world, as on Æolian lute,
Breathes some vast symphony for every hour, [dower.
With meaning fraught to those who have true poet's

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CXXIII.

For Bertrand's soul was tremulously strung,
And every wav'ring breeze which random flew,
Laden with dear delight, its chords among,
To trembling ecstasy their pulses drew;
Ah! life—warm life, each rare and radiant hue,
The soft carnation cheek, the fragrant tress,
The liquid light which siren eyes out-threw,
And many a thought of Beauty's dear excess, [ness.
To quiv'ring rapture mov'd his youth's free blithesome-

CXXIV.

In one, with such a trembling sense of joy,
The passions of the sense with warring heat,
His bosom's peace might passingly annoy;
But he had learnt the tempter to defeat,
Or kill with Parthian arrow of retreat.
In purest paths he taught his thoughts to run,
To serve the Cross with adoration meet,
With sacrifice of self, which like the sun,
Doth robe with heavenly grace all that it looks upon.

CXXV.

So Bertrand's melodies were richly fraught
With aspirations, energy divine,
With praise of song and battles nobly fought,
Of Right and Faith and Beauty; love did twine
Around his lute, as some luxuriant vine
Enwreaths the trellis bars with playful ease;
Thus rang that eve his deep impassion'd line
Along the Golden Horn's bright palaces, [seas.
And stirr'd the languid air, which swoon'd o'er moonlit

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CXXVI.

Nor could the Princess choose but feel some glow
Of virtues born to renovate mankind;
She whose ears loath'd the false Byzantine flow
Of sugar'd song with dainty trick refin'd;
For in Provençal song first woman's mind
Stood forth enfranchis'd from contempt and scorn,
To breathe the boundless air all unconfin'd,
To hold high empire in a world new-born,
And arts, arms, laws, and life with softer hues adorn.

CXXVII.

And he who thus in oracle of song
Disclos'd new visions of a world, had rare
And noble lineaments in truth! Among
The soft, depravèd Greeks no brow so fair—
Apollo's profile; his brown, clust'ring hair
Clung round his fair, white neck; blue eyes, deep set,
Flash'd forth with inspiration; unaware
She gaz'd upon them, when their glances met—
Ah me! in such a glance life's hazard oft is set.

CXXVIII.

For in the soft illumining warm gleam
The features fair of Athenäis shone
Transfigur'd, clear as with celestial beam
Of radiance, like th' ambrosial hue out-thrown
From roseate limbs of angels; as i' th' sun
The mirror's plane swims up in blinding blaze,
So Bertrand's thoughts in dazèd splendour run
Beneath her fair effulgence. That wild gaze,
For madness and despair, was food in after days.

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CXXIX.

For that deep glance,—and one sweet smile and touch
Of courtesy, as on to land she stepp'd,—
All sense and being did immerse in such
A golden cloud of ecstasy, as swept
Clean out the starry sentinels who kept
Aye watch within his soul,—in mad desire
To see—to hear once more—his passions leapt,
His vows, his aspiration half expire
He felt, in this new gulf of phantasy and fire.

CXXX.

And though to think on nought he daily strove,
But on his vow in Christ's dear name to bleed,
And quench the yearnings of delirious love
For one who, of luxurious kin and creed,
Must be unmeet for him whose word and deed
Were pledg'd unto the Cross and Chivalry;
Yet e'er his passion, like a down-press'd reed,
Which rises when the blast has hurried by,
Would spring up blithe anew fresh effort to defy.

CXXXI.

With joy he leapt upon the Asian shore,
And saw Byzant's gold domes recede below
The purple western hills; yet not the more
Did that fierce flame within him cease to glow
As still the army of the Cross spread slow,
And fill'd horizons vast from side to side,
And forded streams and scal'd the mountain snow,
While rear and van did aye the Paynim tide
Of scimitar and spear beat constantly aside.

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CXXXII.

Not though they went (as went that pilgrim band,
Through the piled surges of the clov'n Red Sea,)
An avalanche of death on either hand,
Pois'd on the sword points of all Paynimry—
Could he his fancy from that image free;
But aye in noon-day halt, in bubbling sound
Of long-sought rill, her voice would seem to be;
And while the sleeping multitudes lay round,
From dreams of her he woke upon the tented ground.

CXXXIII.

Ah! little could they tell his secret pang,
Who saw his courage, like a beacon tall,
Blaze in the front of danger. First he sprang
With mail'd feet on Nicæa's batter'd wall,
And Killidj Arslan saw his best son fall
Upon the bloody heights of Gorgoni
Beneath the sword of Bertrand d'Aureval;
And loud he shriek'd, as round he turn'd to flee,
On Mahound, while he tore his beard in agony.

CXXXIV.

His very name unto the Turks had grown
A terror, as along the Franks it flew
In joy from rank to rank; yet not alone
In battle-field was seen the noble hue
Of Bertrand's valour, which shone ever new
In trials when the bravest felt dismay—
In hunger, heat, and thirst, half frozen through,
Amid the snows of Taurus blithe and gay,
None knew what secret care possess'd his heart alway.

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CXXXV.

Thus, when with heat of battle in his vein,
He dash'd into the hall with armèd heel,
The sight of Athenäis, through the brain,
In tangled maze, made thought and wonder reel;
What chance most strange had come thus to reveal
Her who on him had like some planet fair
Once flash'd down from the Zenith. Ah! such weal
Sometimes will fortune, all unhop'd, prepare
To lovers who adore some sov'ran sweet despair.

CXXXVI.

Erect she rose in all her noble height;
Back from her claspèd shoulder drooping fair
A white, gold-broider'd mantle left in sight
A green silk deep-zon'd tunic—loop'd up where
Her tawny buskins golden lac'd, with rare
And carven claws of gold, enclasp'd her feet,
High o'er the ankles, nice as Dian's were
These and her fine arch'd instep; all complete
In guise Olympian, did her form the gazers greet.

CXXXVII.

And as the cactus or magnolia flower
Glows from the dewy green when day is set,
So glow'd her face with such transcendent power;
The radiance of her hair of filmiest jet
Was bright empurpled where the light-gleam met
Its wavy fulness roll'd from her pure brow
Of ivory beneath the golden fret
Of her starr'd anadem; a roseate glow [snow.
Flush'd through cheeks smooth and clear as violet-shaded

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CXXXVIII.

The crowd still mutely on her beauty hung;
Blue-eyed as Pallas was she, and curv'd rays
Of ebon-lustre from her eyelids swung;
Her eyebrows clear yet dainty as a fay's,
Black as a crow's-quill held against the blaze
Of some round harvest-moon. Though mouth and limb
Lack'd not voluptuous ripeness, and a haze
Of Paphian glory seem'd from her to swim,
Her parted lips look'd pure as those of Seraphim.

CXXXIX.

And in her dainty nostril, Grecian line
Of feature, and young brow's white holiness
Was thron'd repose, proud, exquisite, and fine,
Which kept serene her youth's warm loveliness,
And made rude passion feel an inward stress,
And gaze in breathless wonder. Thus awhile
She look'd with air imperial o'er the press,
Her fine lips waver'd with a trembling smile,
She felt how Bertrand would one friendly glance beguile.

CXL.

His blood, all fever'd by the battle strife,
He felt the endless azure of her eyes
Fall full on him, who, with suspended life,
Stood, almost as a boor stands in surprise
At unimagin'd splendour. Memories,
And thought, and feeling, swoon'd within his brain;
But when, with round white arm and queenly wise,
She sign'd for him, with most delicious pain,
All sense within him broke in showers of silver rain.

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CXLI.

"Fair sir," said she, descending, "what ill fate
Me captive made within these walls, to tell
Occasion fits not now. We heard elate
At daybreak yestermorn the fatal yell
Which woke the sleeping Turk, we knew full well
Victory liv'd in your swords. Behind this throne,
While fled the Paynim to the citadel,
I and my maidens, from our prison flown,
Took refuge, by their haste, unguarded, and alone.

CXLII.

"And when the Moslem gone we fully saw
That death at least might come with dignity;
Or that our royal show perchance might awe
The blind revenge of your wild soldiery,
Thereon we waited you. Your courtesy
I pray, to lead us with your knightly arm,
Unto Count Raymond, who in piety
Will surely shield us Christian maids from harm,
Amid this shrieking town's most horrible alarm."

CXLIII.

"Then," said he, "O Princess! would that my sword
Far weightier service could achieve than this;
For that fair face, which charm'd this lawless horde,
No Cavalier amid our host, I wis,
Would fail to count it fortune's highest bliss
To face ten thousand deaths. Let us straightway
Seek my Lord Raymond. Now, we scarce can miss
To find him at St. Peter's, where to say
The psalm of thanks he goes for mercies shown this day."

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CXLIV.

He ceas'd, and waving with his sword, command
He gave to that wild crowd a way to shape
For Athenäis; they, on either hand,
Stood by to see her pass with mouth agape;
When one, a brutal Suabian, round the nape
Of the last maiden, past him as they went,
Threw his rough arm, and like a mighty ape
Grinning cried—"Ha! these Lords are ne'er content,
They would have all."—The crowd roar'd out in merriment.

CXLV.

And all the charm was broke, and still worse now
Perhaps had follow'd. But the King Tafûr
Push'd through his giant bulk, like some ship's prow
Thrusting aside the wave; and stretching o'er
The butt of his huge spear, on that brute boor
Dealt down a reeling blow, and shouted out,
"Ye knaves! he sav'd my life; ye shall endure
His will in silence." Then the rabble-rout
Were still, and all the four pass'd tranquilly without.

CXLVI.

And that bright leopard, growling, side by side,
Went with them, while their onward course they made
Adown the central stair, through jostling tide
Of men and gleaming arms. I' th' colonnade
Count Bertrand found his squire; he there had stay'd
With his bay steed, who paw'd his hoof upon
The marble pavement, prick'd his ears and neigh'd,
And knew his lord; not far, two camels dun
From drooping necks uprear'd their lofty heads i' th' sun.

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CXLVII.

The driver made at Bertrand's hasty word
The patient beasts kneel down. Enthron'd on high
Sate Athenäis 'lone; her damsels soar'd
Aloft and made one burden. The calm sky,
Serene and cloudless, glow'd, and not a sigh
Was breath'd across the air; the orb of day
Was broad'ning in the west, and smilingly
Gilded the bloody harvest of the fray,
As through the town they took their corpse-polluted way.

CXLVIII.

For yet the horrors of the after-strife,
Which make of stormèd towns one murd'rous hell,
Were raging; and from many a parting life
Rang shrieks, and groans, and curses horrible;
While beams burst up in flame as inwards fell
Some mighty edifice. Arm'd men in fight
Upon the house-tops—woman's last wild yell,
As down she leapt to 'scape the spoiler's might,
And white robes from on high flash'd down in ghastly flight.

CXLIX.

The groans of widow'd love—the ceaseless wail
Of mothers childless left, who ne'er would know
Of comfort more; and babes by feet of mail
Crush'd in the ceaseless hurrying to and fro,
Fill'd the wild air with throbs of speechless woe;
And through the discord ever and anon
The sound of prayer and holy chaunt would flow,
The Christian Greeks the Frankish sword to shun
Within their temples sang the Kyrie Eleison.

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CL.

And Athenäis, high above the throng,
Froze at the Gorgon face of massacre,
As through that vast turmoil they pass'd along.
In vain she strove to close both eye and ear,
Until her sight was caught by a wild stir.
A lady on a dizzy balustrade
Of a great palace, stood with scimitar
Clench'd in right hand, and so faced undismay'd
Her foes, while her left arm round pillar'd shaft was laid.

CLI.

She stood in act to leap, and her bright hair
Floated adown her rich vest unconfin'd;
A moment round she look'd in her despair,
As though below some succour she might find,—
And recognition burst upon the mind
Of Athenäis. Ah! indeed 'twas she—
Ayesha, who, with many an office kind,
Had sooth'd the Princess in captivity,
And to the Soldan's self was kin in high degree.

CLII.

"Ayesha! help!—O help! sweet sir, I pray!"
Loud Athenäis shriek'd. "A friend most true
Ayesha was." Then Bertrand leapt straightway
Down from his steed, his plated bridle threw
Unto his squire; in one breath upwards flew,
And thrusting back her foes, with gentle tone
From brink of death the Paynim lady drew,
Who leaping back to life with nerves undone,
Swoon'd in his arms as cold and pale as marble stone.

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CLIII.

Awhile her senses to revive he tried,
Then with impatient look around, he sought
To whom he might his helpless charge confide.
He saw a priest, who all in vain had wrought
Before to save the maid—him he besought
To guard the lady; then adown he flew,
A sense of danger troubling all his thought
For Athenäis. Ah! alas! too true,
For she and all he left without were lost to view.

CLIV.

Forwards rush'd Bertrand; from beneath the feet
Of passing crowds, with pale and bleeding brow
He drew his fair young page; faint was the beat
Of life within his pulse. He open'd slow
His eyes, which seem'd his young lord's face to know,
And then were clos'd in death's fix'd stony stare. [blow?
"Dear boy!" cried Bertrand, "whose the dastard
What hope to find? what hope to find, and where?
When every street is throng'd with Havoc and Despair."

CLV.

Rage, love, and grief tumultuously hurl
In conflict every passion wild which slept
Within him. As he stood with darken'd whirl
Of thought within his brain, there to him crept
The leopard; down his silken chest there swept
A fall of blood: a broken spear shaft clung
Within the wound: the poor beast mutely kept
His eyes on Bertrand as he o'er him hung;
The chain-mail of his feet he lick'd with fondling tongue.

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CLVI.

Wildly dash'd Bertrand through the roaring tide,
Him, him, and him he question'd, but in vain;
And all kept hurrying on, for eventide
Was thick'ning. From the camp the lumb'ring train
Kept rolling on, the car, the creaking wain
Groan'd on beneath War's monstrous arsenal—
Mules, dromedaries, camels heap'd with grain
Wended to work Duke Godfrey's will that all
The camp that night should pass within the City Wall.

CLVII.

One vast, confusèd noise the wide town stirr'd;
The bells of mules and camels, axle-groan;
The strokes and oaths of drivers, low of herd;
On litters borne the sick and wounded moan;
Here monks led forth the slain with chaunting tone;
Here some with shouts their glittering booty shew,
Goblets and stuffs of gold; and one by one
The stars came softly through the Syrian blue,
Trembling like angel's tears, when man's fell crimes they [rue.

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CANTO II.

SIEGE.

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CANTO II.

I.

O THOU, who hold'st within thy classic shrine
The storied scrolls of glory and of shame,
Searcher for hidden Truth with zeal divine,
Redresser of the wrongs of noisy fame,
O gravest Muse! O History, proclaim,
With stern impartial brow, the tidings dread,
Count thou the needless victims to God's name;
But thou, sweet Poesy, thou turn'st the head,
Nor count'st the charnel heaps, nor ling'rest with the dead.

II.

For there are pages in the blood-stain'd book
Of crime and ruin of departed time,
Where thou, dear Poesy, dost veil the look.
Much is there too of folly and of crime
Which thou canst not rehearse in thy soft rhyme;
Yet he who lists unto thy accents smooth,
Attun'd to concords tender and sublime,
Knows more than pedants teach in sounds uncouth,
And leans with faith on God and man's immortal Youth.

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III.

And so, if black the shade of Horror lower
From out the record of that high emprize,
Let not the sceptic scoff. Hell's envious pow'r
To mar each holiest purpose watching lies,
And mixes oft with saints in traitor guise.
Prize we the more the virtues of old time,
And keep the stars it left before our eyes—
The stars of Truth and energy sublime—
Nor joy to find o'er all the track of serpent slime.

IV.

Thus when that mighty city, Antioch, fell,
The Muse tells not what impious deeds were done;
How drunken Carnage, with delirious yell,
Pil'd the dark corpse-heaps in the Syrian sun,
And slew, and spoil'd, and feasted. One by one
The chiefs essay'd the hideous rout to quell;
Where'er they prosper'd all was soon undone,
Hate, wine, revenge—lust hot with flames of hell,
Inspir'd the anarch host more madly to rebel.

V.

But on the third day where the golden sun
Should flame with perfect orb upon the blue,
The sentinels beheld a vapour dun
Robe half the sky in one portentous hue;
And soon the rumour through the city flew,
And thousands clamber'd to the rampart wall,
While near and nearer yet the portent grew
Full many a harden'd heart was heard to call,
"Lord, I have sinn'd; on me let all thy vengeance fall!"

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VI.

And soon from out the bosom of the mist
Flash'd waves of steel, and fiery shield, and lance,
By the sun's beams to quiv'ring splendour kist,—
Unstable gleams of dazzling radiance,
Till from the dusk horizon's vast expanse
Through the on-rolling clouds' confusèd gloom
Flash'd the sloped lines of spears in slow advance,
And lines of horse and foot as thickly loom,
As though the desert sand should living form assume.

VII.

Then through the streets was hurrying to and fro,
From chief to chief the heralds rush'd along;
And many a feasting crew in all the glow
Of Syrian vintage midnight mirth and song
Came from the wine-stain'd board into the throng;
Those who had fall'n within the glitt'ring snare
Of Eastern beauty, burst the enchantment strong;
The Hareem's proud Empress curs'd her beauty rare;
Deserted lay and wept the light-limb'd Bayadère.

VIII.

For now they spurning left all that which late
Had held the senses in delirious thrall,
And Paynim beauty meets with scorn and hate,
And one Repentance melts the hearts of all.
Some on the knees e'en on the pavement fall,
With quiv'ring lips and streaming eyes to pray,
Till o'er the crowd the priests exhorting call—
" O Pilgrims! to Christ's altar come away,
And mercy ask of Him, who doth forgive alway."

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IX.

The domes of prayer then oped their portals wide—
Domes wrought by Christian Greeks, whence lately
The Moueddhin's call, morn, noon, and eventide—[rang
There in full choir the pilgrim voices sang
Of her who felt th' ineffable sharp pang,
Kneeling in grief the Holy Cross below;
Nor ceas'd each one adoring looks to hang
Upon the Crucified—all seem'd to know
More of the love of Christ, through that maternal woe.

X.

Meanwhile, in breathless speed and loud acclaim,
The heralds had Duke Godfrey's summons told
To all the chieftains, who now hast'ning came,
With their great leader, high debate to hold.
Their council chamber was the Hall of Gold,
Within the palace, where but lately sate,
Amid his dread divan, that Soldan old.
While crowds of humbler pilgrims flock and wait,
To mark each world-fam'd chief who enters at the gate.

XI.

And oft, the murmurs of applause ran round,
As many a form of god-like mien pass'd through
With ringing step; whose visage, sun-embrown'd,
Whose dinted arms and rich robes stained hue,
Told of the long campaign. First came Count Hugh
Of Vermandois, the Great; the sunbeams dance
Around his jewell'd crest; on surcoat blue,
There shone the golden fleur-de-lis of France,
Than he no nobler knight e'er couch'd the quiv'ring lance.

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XII.

He, while his brother, Philip, by the Seine
Fulfill'd his royal destiny, led now
The hosts of France upon the battle plain;
Swift pass'd he on; knit was his thoughtful brow;
Upon his youthful cheeks there was a glow
Of high resolve. With nervous hand he press'd
His massive sword-hilt fitfully, as though
Deeds he lov'd more than counsel, while his breast
Heav'd like a sea beneath the red cross on his vest.

XIII.

One next, of age mature, passed through the throng—
Count Raymond of Toulouse, who held in fee
That land e'er dear to chivalry and song;
Delightful Provence, whose sweet minstrelsy
Looms like palm islet from a barren sea
Amid an age's inharmonious moan,
Prescient of love and immortality;
O'er castled keep and battlemented stone,
Count Raymond lorded all adown Garonne and Rhone.

XIV.

Full fifty summers had Count Raymond seen; [grey,
His beard's rich brown was random touch'd with
His stature not o'er lofty, and his mien
Chang'd quick and lightly from sedate to gay;
His large brown eyeballs and his mouth's fine play
Told of his earnest or his mirthful mood;
At council board, and in the dusty fray,
His lordly presence was a solace good,—
Prompt in design of war and deeds of hardihood.

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XV.

For he in Arragon and old Castile
Had served with Don Rodrigo di Bivar;
And oft the Cid, unto his breast of steel
Had clasp'd Count Raymond as his peer in war.
Upon his cheek the Moslem scimitar
Had left a token of the bloody day
Beneath Valencia's walls; but that red scar
Did Raymond to the donor well repay,
When low a trampled corpse King Abdarahman lay.

XVI.

Thus Moslem stratagem he knew full well;
In peaceful leisure, too, the Moors among
He learn'd the arts in which they did excel.
Well versèd was he in the Arab tongue,
And e'en their poets, in Provençal song,
He could rehearse right well and pleasantly.
All greeted gaily as he pass'd along,
And many a humble pilgrim bent the knee,
For of his boundless wealth right liberal was he.

XVII.

Well might you know from his frank, open look,
And from the careless splendour which he wore,
That of his riches little heed he took;
And aye a will indomitable and sure
Within his smiling lips watch'd evermore.
Behind his banner swept into the fight
Ten thousand knights of Provence; and four score
Were nam'd his Golden knights, all rich bedight;
Their chief Count Bertrand was, whose love was his delight.

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XVIII.

Next follow'd one, who o'er his coat of mail
The sacred vestment of a bishop bore;
The mitred Adhèmar, good de Monteil,
Rome's holy Legate. Him not sacred lore,
Him not the Pontiff's ensign, render'd more
Rever'd than his great heart and spotless zeal.
To him, as to some blessèd saint of yore,
That pilgrim crowd were there full fain to kneel, [feel.
And some stretch'd forth their hands his sacred robe to

XIX.

For he was such a priest as seldom here [heart;
Doth Heaven send down to comfort man's weak
A noble soul, in piety sincere,
He in the battle heat would shun no part,
Yet consolation's balm could well impart
Unto the anguish'd conscience, and allay
The pangs of ghostly fear, affliction's smart;
He show'd the portals of eternal day,
And sent the soul in peace upon its heavenly way.

XX.

He cheer'd the good, and lifted up the base;
Made halting Honour look with aspect bright
Upon Disaster's gaunt and blood-stain'd face;
He made the coward fear a shameful flight
E'en more than death, and feel heroic might;
And in the council, when dispute was keen,
And princes bandied words of scorn and spite,
He rose, with look majestic and serene,
And soon to concord turn'd each hot and angry spleen.

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XXI.

Nor less, when victory lit the flame of lust,
And wild revenge lent every passion base
Demoniac strength, and in the blood-stain'd dust
The maid and mother knelt in vain for grace,
Did he essay, with high reproof, to chase
Each demon tempter to his spectral nook.
Where'er he turn'd he gave a breathing space
To Mercy; in new flight her wings she shook,
And Murder dropp'd his steel at her seraphic look.

XXII.

At Clermont, at the Pontiff Urban's feet,
He was the first who knelt, and wept, and vow'd
Himself unto the Cross with martyr-heat;
Him follow'd to the East a noble crowd
Of Knights Auvergnat. Like a thunder cloud
He burst with them upon the Turkish rear
At Gorgoni, and through that tumult loud
Rode side by side with him he loved so dear,
Count Raymond. None deem'd now his mortal end was [near.

XXIII.

Next Robert Count of Flanders swiftly came,
And him they greeted with applause, as one
Most prompt at call of danger; hence his name—
The Sword and Lance of Christendom. The sun
Ne'er shone on man more valiant; he had won
Such love, that never there could any lord
Make all so blithely at his service run;
And spite of all the terrors of his sword,
The Moslem lov'd him well, and priz'd his plighted word.

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XXIV.

Blue-eyed and auburn lock'd, of visage gay,
He moved along, a sunshine in his e'e;
His wife, sweet Clemence, ere he left Yprès,
With tearful face her boys placed on his knee,
And made him swear by their sweet infancy
That he as soon as e'er his vow were done,
And Christ's dear tomb from Paynim insult free,
Would longer linger not another sun,
But hasten home straightway and further danger shun.

XXV.

Next after, Robert, Duke of Normandie,
Surnam'd Curthose, in friendly parley came
With Stephen Count of Blois, Amboise, and Brie;
Two kinsmen, since Count Stephen's noble dame
Was Adèle child of William, who o'ercame
At Hastings, robber of the Saxon's crown.
Valiant was Robert, but small share could claim
Of Norman cunning; and e'er apt to drown
His duty in debauch, he soil'd his high renown.

XXVI.

Hence nought avail'd his spirit high and gay;
Hence nought avail'd his gen'rous heart and bold;
Since at the last he died the captive grey
Of Henry Beauclerc, in a dungeon cold;
And fate most foul he in a prison-hold
Found from a brother upon Christian ground,
(Such was the Norman's lust for power and gold,)
More mercy he from Moslem hearts had found;
But to Ambition's ear love is an idle sound.

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XXVII.

Diverse was Stephen; he whose castle grim
At Blois was buttress'd o'er the rushing Loire;
He lov'd to saunter by the daisied rim
Of fountains, and to list the forest choir,—
He with a practis'd finger struck the lyre.
A Trouvère good, fond of illumin'd book,
To live for song was his supreme desire;
But him the frenzy of the Cross o'ertook,
Nor dared he lag behind Scorn's public glance to brook.

XXVIII.

He follow'd, who, perchance, most spotless name
Has left of all that host to after days,
Tancred; whose saintly soul, nor lust of fame,
Nor power could vanquish, nor mad thirst of praise.
All on his noble form with reverence gaze.
Majestic, and yet full of grace he stept;
Where'er he turn'd the dark and lustrous blaze
Of his deep eyes, aloof all meanness crept,
And every impulse good with new found vigour leapt.

XXIX.

Broad was his brow; dark, pallid was the hue
Of his Italian features, such a face
Had he as Francia or Da Vinci drew.
Of deep-brow'd energy and earnest grace,
And strength severe on adamantine base
Of self-containèd vehemence and fire:
And in the look of Tancred none could trace
A gleam of wrath, or scorn, or petty ire;
No slave of passion he, or thrall of low desire.

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XXX.

While Tancred stood upon the verge of youth,
And his lip darken'd first with manhood's down,
Accents divine of Christian love and truth
Found echo in his heart; and though renown
Him victor nam'd of many a tourney crown,
The pride of all Italia's chivalry,
Yet did the combat's tumult never drown
A voice which cried, "Such joys are not for thee
Who can win crowns for Christ and immortality!"

XXXI.

And his soul day by day, upon the meek
And holy fame of Jesus had so dwelt,
That he had ta'en in hate the bloody reek
And dusty din of battle, and he knelt
Full oft, while all unheeded and unfelt
The hours flew by, and he in vigil still
Ask'd sign from heav'n to throw his knightly belt
And spurs away, that Christ's most blessèd will
He might on earth in peace and saintly wise fulfil.

XXXII.

And such religious awe possess'd his soul,
That in the silver ring of vesper-bell,
And in the bursting organ's sounding roll,
And in the mass's solemn pause and swell,
He grew resolv'd to live beyond the spell
Of earth's temptations, and ambition's lure,
The peaceful tenant of a convent cell,
To seek the joys which do alone endure,
With Christ and all his saints bound in communion pure.

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XXXIII.

Thus was his martial ardour well-nigh dead,
When on his ear a cry of anguish wild
Burst from the land where Christ's dear blood was shed,
And oped for man the gates of mercy mild;
Then when he heard of our Lord's tomb defil'd
By Turkish hordes, from Asian wilds outpour'd,
Of murder'd Christians,—mother, maid, and child,—
The helpless prey of infidels abhorr'd,
His heart leapt up once more to grasp th' avenging sword.

XXXIV.

And thus than his no heart in Europe burn'd
With holier zeal or more heroic heat
To vindicate Christ's land from those who spurn'd
His hallow'd precincts with barbarian feet.
Thus he his life a sacrifice complete
Could give to Him who man's affliction bore;
Thus could he turn the high chivalric feat
To use of piety; for evermore
All other hope and joy he fervently forswore.

XXXV.

Of a Sicilian Count was he the son;
His mother was the daughter of Guiscard;
The sister of Prince Bohemond, who won
The next his way; his white plume from afar
Loom'd loftily above his peers in war,
Who crowded next—the Duke of Brittany—
The Count d'Hainault—Conon de Montémar—
Gerard de Rousillon—Enguerrand de Couci;
The Dukes of Montferrat, Anjou, and Burgundy.

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XXXVI.

While these and more flock'd on in ceaseless flow
Beneath the vast hall's fretted roof of gold,
Duke Godfrey sate in lowly state below
The Sultan's throne, which all in vain enroll'd
Its glittering sheen for him, who could behold
The spoils of empires with contemptuous eye;
But there was in the helm whose steely fold
Encompass'd his broad brow such majesty
As made the pomp of kings seem but a glittering lie.

XXXVII.

For virtue, reverence, awe-inspiring love,
Had robed his noble form with grace divine;
And Wisdom, guileless as the gentle dove,
Shed o'er his grand, fair brow a light benign.
Mild was his look, as though he would incline
His ear to mercy, when the scales he weigh'd
Of justice: yet his mien was leonine,
And in his eagle eyes there ever play'd
The lightning glance by which the multitudes are sway'd.

XXXVIII.

Thoughtful he sate, in statue-like repose,
Nor stirr'd the golden dragon of his crest,
Save when from time to time his look uprose
To mark what chief fail'd yet. One hand caress'd
The lean head of a wolf-hound, lain in rest
Where on his mailèd thigh the fold did light
Of the fair surcoat, which, drawn o'er his chest,
Was stainless all, save where upon the right
The blood red cross gleam'd clear—the infidels' affright.

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XXXIX.

Between his scalèd knees, his mighty brand
Lean'd and reliev'd the bossy belt of all
Its burthen, and within his mail'd right hand
An open scroll lay cross'd with wreathèd scrawl
Of Orient characters. And by the wall
A little way sate men in Eastern guise—
Dark features swath'd round in the turban shawl,
In robes of silken sheen and stripèd dyes,
Who silent look'd o'er all with dark and solemn eyes.

XL.

Then Eustace, entering, by De Bouillon sate,
In the fair concord of fraternal soul:
Younger was Eustace, brighter, more elate,
Fairer his locks, a bluer brilliance stole
From out his eyes. And much in talk they roll
On news their brother had now sent to them—
Baldwin, who held Edessa in control;
Great servant of the Cross, who next of stem
Of the De Bouillons wore crown in Jerusalem.

XLI.

And soon the champion chiefs of Christendom
Met in full conclave, and throughout the hall
Resplendent mail and gorgeous scarf and plume,
And helm and crest, bright gleams of light let fall,
Bright'ning th' embossèd gold of roof and wall;
And where a sunbeam through veil'd casement went,
A track of light blaz'd to the eyes of all,
Who sat in groups, or stood at rest, and leant
Their hands upon their swords with heads expectant bent.

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XLII.

Then when full thrice the herald's voice had rung
For silence, from his seat De Bouillon rose,
And as he stood the eyes of each one hung
With awe anew upon the grand repose
Of that most royal aspect, to which foes
Had bent adoring; and ere he began,
As each heart yearn'd with expectation's throes,
All felt how awful was that hour's brief span,
Pregnant with fate of realms, and woe or weal to man.

XLIII.

"Princes and cavaliers," De Bouillon spoke,
"If ye Christ's holy ensign had endu'd
For worldly fame or purpose. If with cloak
Of simulated zeal, ye had pursu'd
Power or aggrandizement. In doubtful mood,
In anxious fear, I should behold ye now;
But in my soul I feel assurance good
That the most holy purpose of your vow
Doth, like a beacon, still with undimm'd lustre glow.

XLIV.

"O Champions of the Cross! Christ's grace I pray
Attend you here, and sway your minds aright;
For only yet in war's tumultuous fray
Ye have defied the Paynim's wrath and spite,
And carv'd a path through numbers infinite;
But now one comes with glozing tongue to speak
Of mutual league, which may your arms unite
Against a common foe, for he would wreak
Vengeance through you, there where alone he is too weak.

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XLV.

"A miscreant's proffers ever are suspect,
So look ye, for these Paynim whom ye see
From Cairo come, in embassy elect
From Egypt's Caliph. They in galleys three,
Just as our Pisan fleet stood out to sea,
Enter'd within the harbour yestere'en,
Freighted with gifts of Orient luxury—
Gems, ostrich plumes, and robes of glossiest sheen;
Gold vases, Arab steeds, and sabres Damascene.

XLVI.

"Ye know the Saracens are split in twain—
One Caliph rules at Bagdad. From the Nile
The Fatimite unto the Moors of Spain
Holds empire, and aye seeks by force or guile
To hurt the hostile Caliph, who the while
Strikes firm alliance with the hordes accurst
Of Turks, worst pest of all the Paynim vile,
Whose countless swarms from o'er the Oxus burst,
To quench in realms o'erthrown war's hot, insensate thirst.

XLVII.

"And aye hath been interminable feud
Between Turk and Egyptian from the day
When at the Abbasside's veil in rev'rence sued
The Son of Seljuk, and the Caliph grey,
Who holds Mohammed's staff with nerveless sway,
Releas'd the empire of the East and West
Unto the Turk Sultàn, who then straightway
Put on the sword and donn'd th' imperial vest,
And plac'd the crown of power upon his helmèd crest.

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XLVIII.

"Though oft the Turkish scimitar has flash'd
In victory o'er Egypt,—yet has fate
Chang'd sides, since late their hostile forces clash'd
Within Jerusalem, whose sad estate
Is aye the spoil of Paynim love or hate;
Thence hath the haughty Fatimite out-driven
The Turk, and rules in victory elate;
But when the powers of hell are discord-riv'n,
Then swiftly grows the work which is ordain'd by heav'n.

XLIX.

"Well then, their gifts and specious words of peace
Consider. But 'tis fitting that you hear
Yourselves his proffers, since in fluent ease
Two of the Moslem who are sitting here [ear!"—
Can speak the Frankish tongue. Chieftains, give
With that at given sign a Moslem rose,
And greeted all th' assembly far and near;
In Eastern wise he touch'd heart, lips, and brows,
Then gan in hurried speech his purpose to disclose.

L.

And first he wish'd that there might 'tween them be
The peace of heav'n, since with such true intent
The Caliph had sent forth this embassy;
And then in phrase of Eastern compliment
He spake of all the awe and wonderment
Which Frankish valour had so nobly won:
"Where'er," he said, "the faithful Moslem bent
His face to Meccah at the setting-sun
The fame of each Frank chief in victory's lustre shone.

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LI.

"Yet not," he cried, "with the embattled square,
And with the cleaving axe are made secure
The spoils of valour, but with foresight, care,
And skill, to hold in curb with judgment sure
The foaming steeds of conquest, when through lure
Of ends impossible, a glorious past
Upon war's spear-point, trembles insecure;
For seldom in one mind does Fortune last,
And those she lifts up most fall swiftest, headlong cast.

LII.

"Occasion ever is most swift of flight,
Slow to return,—yet have ye prosper'd well
In painful march, pitch'd field, and random fight—
In towns besieg'd, and captur'd citadel,
Nicæa, Samosata, they can tell,
Tarsus, Edessa, and the stormèd gate
Of steep Mamistra, with what constant spell
Ye have made victory on your banners wait,
And swept in torrent strength like one resistless fate.

LIII.

"And warriors have ye who such feats have done
As would Rustàm have honour'd, who made name
Of greatest prowess, 'neath our Eastern sun.
Now, since the trumpet tongue of noisy Fame
With e'er increasing din to Cairo came,
Our Caliph Mostali—who has his race
From Ali, unrever'd by sons of shame—
Ali, whom so the Prophet had in grace
That Fatima his child he wed to his embrace,—

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LIV.

"My Master, say I, since the echoes still
Of your deeds strengthen'd, deem'd that all the light
Of your success was token of the will
Of Allah, that by you his vengeance might
Be wrought upon the Turks, whose fell delight
Hath been to vex the Prophet's Holy Blood;
And he is willing now his faith to plight
Alliance firm to join for common good
That Christian men may share in Moslem brotherhood.

LV.

"And since within the Holy City now
Our Caliph rules, he offers in his grace
That Christians all, who take the pilgrim's vow,
Shall have free access to each sacred place,
And full leave to remain for one month's space
Unarm'd in pilgrim-garb, and that he will
The Christian shrines embellish, and erase
What marks of scorn are uneffacèd still,
And this on the Koràn swear wholly to fulfil.

LVI.

"Refuse ye now his offer fair to take,
For long, long years will Christian women weep
This rueful day. For burning fierce to slake
Their wild revenge, the Turkish myriads sweep
From the wide wilds of Asia's unknown deep;
And they have quell'd each jealousy and feud
Which make their tribes in weak disunion keep;
And if your force they singly have withstood,
How hardly will ye meet combin'd the desert-brood?

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LVII.

"Know ye, this morn we learn'd how vast the host
Whose horrent arms now glisten in your sight;
For as the deluge from the mountains loos'd
From every gorge gains tributary might,
So now the hosts of Kerbogah unite
The gathering hordes of every far Ameer
Whom the false Caliph's proclamations cite
To fight for Islam, and when Moslems hear
That summons, none are slow, I ween, to grasp the spear.

LVIII.

"From mosque to mosque where'er the chotbah-prayer
For the Abbasside sues to Allah's might,
From Cufa and Persepolis, to where
The Tartar in his hair tents black and white
Drains the fermented mare's-milk with delight,
Flock tribes and towns around the standards black,
Those ensigns styl'd the Shadow and the Night,
Whose sable folds prophetic of the wrack [track.
Of empires, have e'er waved in Conquest's blood-stain'd

LIX.

"As when the locusts, on the east-wind borne,
Swarm close o'er field and roof, fill stream and well,
So thick 'mid crash of cymbal, gong and horn,
With neighing steed, and tinkling camel-bell,
With lab'ring ox, and driver's oath and yell,
Comes their destroying host. The firmament
Is darken'd all, as though the mouth of hell
For the world's judgment were asunder rent;
Earth reels beneath the tramp of their wide armament.

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LX.

"From every land of Persia's varied clime
The Shah Borkiarok sends the serried clan,
And to the tymbalon's deep, deaf'ning chime
The Caliph's guard—the dreaded Agulàn—
Come cloth'd in mail complete, both horse and man,
From Bussora and Ormuz to the sea
Of Aral; from wide fertile Khorassàn,
From Khiva, Balk, Merv, Herat, and Ghuznee;
Comes the Iranian might in glittering panoply.

LXI.

"Nor e'en does he who sways the mighty host,
The Sultàn of Mossùl, less numbers lead
From Bactria, Susiana, and the coast
Of the salt Caspian; from realms where the Mede
Held empire, and from where his noble steed
The Arab pastures on the wasted bank
Of Tigris and Euphrates, and the reed
In flooded courts of kings stands thick and dank;
From wide Adjerbijàn to Caf's stupendous flank.

LXII.

"Next the twin giant sons of Malekshah
Rodvàn and Dokak, from the districts wide
Of Haleb and Damascus myriads draw;
Next Killidj Arslàn leads Roum's warrior pride,
Sokmàn and Ilgazi as chiefs divide
The archer horse of wide-stepp'd Turchestàn;
From Yemen and from Hidjaz Arabs ride
Beneath the spear of Ahmed Ebn Merwàn,
Nor fail the sinewy steeds of mountain Kurdestàn.

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LXIII.

"And Dahereddin from Diarbekir
Leads on his thousands, and the proud Sultàn,
His legions arm'd with bow, and shield, and spear,
Sends forth from Khowaresm. The Usbek Khan
Leads his mace-bearing Tartars. In the van,
On panther skins, with silver'd saddle-peak,
The Turkish squadrons ride, clan after clan;
So vast their host, and still of many a Sheik,
And many a famed Ameer, I have forborne to speak.

LXIV.

"Yet now, e'en now, while still around ye swell
The floods of danger, will my Master take
Your bond of friendship. Franks, consider well."
With that he ended. And e'en while he spake
From time to time opposing murmurs brake
From many a hearer, which were still'd straightway,
And divers, as he ceas'd, would answer make;
But when they saw Rome's Legate-Priest essay
To speak, each chief at once most willingly gave way.

LXV.

"O soldiers of the Cross!" De Monteil cried;
"Again, again, unto the throne of grace
My heart swells forth with reverential pride,
For had I noted in one warrior's face
A shade of joy or hesitation base,
My heart had burst for anguish and for shame.
O may the Faith in Christ so e'er embrace
Your martial souls in its undying flame,
That Faith which is beyond or human praise or blame.

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LXVI.

"O Thou, whose dread inscrutable behest
The wingèd terrors of the world obey—
Havoc, destruction, famine, want, and pest—
Who holdest in Thy dread, mysterious sway
The empire of the powers of night and day;
Who on the land of Thy dear Son has sent
Such visitations, that the fair array
Of Thy creation seems all hack'd and rent,
And ill throughout the world inextricably blent,—

LXVII.

"One boon I pray, for Thy dear Jesus' sake;
Oh, let this sinful flesh the pasture be
Of beasts obscene, e'er that the Christians make
League with the Paynim in equality,
Or by accord of Christian chivalry
The ensign of the prophet false shall wave
Above Christ's tomb in impious victory,
And the pale Christian crouch an unarm'd slave
Above the cradle of his creed, the Saviour's grave.

LXVIII.

"O Holy Land, once so belov'd of God!
That here His own dear Son came down to bear
The burden of man's sorrows; on whose sod
He walk'd with infant footsteps, and took share
Of the salt bread, which is the daily fare
Of the poor outcast; where His piercèd feet
And hands were nail'd unto the cross, and where
He lay entomb'd, then burst death's winding-sheet,
And walk'd and spoke with man again in field and street.

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LXIX.

"O Palestine! from whence He mounted up
To sit co-equal on th' Eternal throne;
Was it for this He drain'd the bitter cup
Of agony, that thou perpetual moan
Shouldst make amid thy altars overthrown—
That Christian men should ever moan and bleed,
Thy maidens weep, unheeded and unknown;
Slaves of the blood-stain'd, dark, lascivious creed [greed.
Which heats with hell's own fire each fierce barbarian's

LXX.

"Oh, shall the Moslem, with permissive scorn,
Uphold the victor creed of Mahomet,
While Christ's pure faith, dishonour'd and forlorn,
On the same soil which with His wound was wet,
Pines in the shade of Mosque and Minaret!
O star of Bethlehem!—O holy sign!—
Cross of the passion and the bloody sweat;
He unto Paynim hands who would resign
The birth-place of his creed, he is no son of thine!

LXXI.

"Go, men of Cairo, to your master—say
That we forget not all the bloodshed brought
On Christians, in the Caliph Hakeem's day;
What shameful wrong the sway of Egypt wrought
Upon the Church of Christ, the wild onslaught,
When your barbarians burst into each shrine,
While in the suppliant guise of reverent thought
Our brethen on each festival divine [and wine.
Implor'd the peace of heav'n, and shar'd Christ's bread

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LXXII.

"Then from the temples built for psalm and prayer
The death-shriek rang throughout the Holy Land,
And those who liv'd in madness and despair
Invok'd the boon of the destroying hand;
And lust and rapine led each robber band,
In town and village to the Christian's door,
Rifled the cot, and hurl'd the fiery brand;
And by her hair, with ruffian clutches, tore
The maiden from the hearth wet with paternal gore.

LXXIII.

"Nor spar'd ye then our faith's most hallow'd fane—
The Holy Sepulchre. In shame and woe
We name the day, when at the mass was slain
Our Pontiff, and the blood-stream from his brow
Ran down the altar-steps in mingled flow
With Christ's own vintage; and the pilgrim crowd
Defenceless perish'd, since the murderous foe
Had barr'd the portals, and with insults loud [shroud.
Leapt on the stone where lay man's Saviour in his

LXXIV.

"From town to town then rang the moaning cry
Of want and unimaginable pain,
Of moon-struck frenzy and wild agony;
And foodless, homeless crowds, in dumb complain
Crouch'd in the street, or wander'd on the plain;
And some died slow beneath the sun's hot ray
The death of famine; some, with stricken brain,
Upon their fellows turn'd; some would allay
Their hunger upon forms become Corruption's prey.

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LXXV.

"Oh! these were children Christ had died to save,
Who with meek lips, kneel'd down as we to kiss
The cup of Christ's own blood; who in His grave
Rever'd the pledge of man's eternal bliss.
These should be bonds of stronger love, I wis,
Than aught that forgèd is of man's desire;
In His pure name, who 'scap'd the dread abyss,
Who lit man's cold hopes with celestial fire,
O Moslem! we are here arm'd with fraternal ire.

LXXVI.

"Upon the regions of His birth and death
We come t' avenge the majesty of Him
Who, with His dying vivifying breath,
Has sanctified the world. The cherubim,
And all th' angelic host, who hourly hymn
The praises of th' Eternal, give us aid:
We trust not in the strength of Anakim,
Nor in the powers of earth, but in the shade
Of heav'n's own glory fight, embattled and array'd.

LXXVII.

"Moslem, with you we came not here to bind
A baseless league, the sport of every hour,
Toss'd by the eddies of each idle wind;
For league is built up of concordant power,
And on the heart's like need. Then, like a tow'r,
It stands deep basèd on all human truth;
And when the storms of evil thickliest low'r,
It shines afar, with renovated youth,
Unharm'd of foul mistrust or scorn's malignant tooth.

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LXXVIII.

"To give Christ's law to Christ's belovèd land—
To purify His altars, and to save
The meek and lowly from th' oppressor's hand—
To keep His peace above His holy grave,
That His dear Cross in regal state may wave,
On Zion's hill, for all the Earth to see,
That all alike may there Christ's mercy crave,
May in supreme and scatheless sovereignty
Adore the faint footsteps upon Mount Calvary.

LXXIX.

"Such is our task, and His dread will who sent
The Christ, who made our yearning hearts aspire
To this great end, will guide our armament:
For like the chaff, in th' eternal fire
Of His revenge, the heathen shall expire.
Go—let thy lord for peace or war decide—
Let Egypt, Afric, Asia, all conspire;
Our standards never shall float side by side
With those who justice mock and scorn the Crucified."

LXXX.

Scarce had he ended, when one murmur burst
From out the wide assemblage, hoarse and deep:
As the Lauwine, which wintry snows have nurs'd,
Falls on the herdsmen's ears who on some steep
By Eigher Alp or spotless Jungfrau, keep
Their pasturing herds; so loud and louder grew
Th' applause resounding—till in one swift leap
It pass'd without; and through the myriads flew
The war-cries—"*Saint Sepulcre!*" "*Montjoie!*" and
["*Diex lo veut!*"

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LXXXI.

But of the Moslem, Djezzar, the fourth son
Of Hassan, Bey of Moorish Tripoli,
Leapt to his feet, with many a malison,
And from his belt he drew out furiously
His khanjar, shouting—"War then let it be;
And by the Prophet's beard, e'en as this steel
In my hands knows no tinge of clemency,
So in the hands of Allah shall I feel [deal.
A weapon, forg'd and shap'd, the Christian's doom to

LXXXII.

"In equal mood, the multitudinous throng
Of Islam, must ye combat evermore,
From where the vex'd Atlantic roars along
The coasts of Maroc, turban'd Mogadore;
From Algiers, Tunis, and from Barca's shore,
To far beyond where snows eternal stay
On Hindoo Kosh, and on the ridges frore
Of Altountagh, to where the Mongols sway
Thibet unto the bounds of silken-rob'd Kathay.

LXXXIII.

"Nor less your foes within the realms, where erst
The great Mahmoud our Prophet's standard bore,
And smote to dust the Hindoo gods accurst:—
In Cashgar, Caubul, Punjaub, and Lahore,
In Delhi, Guzerat, Berar and Mysore,
By Coromandel's coast, and Malabar,
Unto the torrid peaks of Travancore,
There shall our creeds for ever meet in war
Till without peer shall shine of one the victor star."

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LXXXIV.

His voice was like a shatt'ring trumpet, blown
By some Titanic demon of War's train,
When with a yell War leaps upon the throne
Of murder'd Peace. The Moor then sheath'd again
His silver-hilted khanjar—his eyes twain
Flam'd, while his white burnous he gather'd in,
And stood in giant height and stared amain;
Then, as sometimes amid the tempest's din,
An interval of calm athwart its roar will win,

LXXXV.

So, for a while in silence each one sate,
As though all saw the seas of blood arise
Which were enfolded in the Moslem's hate;
Then Bohemond began in honey'd wise
To speak of prudence, caution, compromise;
How vain it were to tempt the tricks of fate,
All rules of worldly conduct to despise.
"Better," he cried, "the issue to await,
If yet this countless host you can beat from your gate."

LXXXVI.

So argued Bohemond, and his specious plea
Converted all the weaker, who would fain
Take safety's side and call it policy:
And many spoke the council to sustain
Of De Monteil, and scarcely could restrain
Their fiery veh'mence—and dispute wax'd high,
Till sage De Bouillon concord made again,
And all agreed not yet to make reply,
But to await the siege, and let some days pass by.

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LXXXVII.

In constant path the fire-orb'd sun roll'd o'er
The spotless blue, and still the multitude
Of Asiatic myriads more and more
Enclos'd the city, till at length it stood
Encompass'd, like some island, with the flood
Of Islam's wild avengers. From each tow'r
The eye saw nought but one infinitude
Of tents and gleaming arms. And hour by hour
The Frank beheld some growth of Asia's furious pow'r.

LXXXVIII.

In taunting scorn the Moslem cavalry
Scour o'er the plain beneath the Christian's eyes;
Some wave their gleaming scimitars on high
With songs of triumph and insulting cries;
Some toss the lithe jereed unto the skies;
The Toorkman squadron rides close to the wall,
Shoots forth its arrowy rain, and wheeling, flies;
The Kurdish chieftains shake their lances tall,
And on the Christian chiefs in loud defiance call.

LXXXIX.

Before the southern gate the Arab tribes
Insulting wheel about the level space,
With shouts and laughter and defiant jibes
They sport in mimic game of war and chase;
Hors'd on steeds ostrich-thigh'd of Nedjdean race,
Like flocks of eagles do they charge and sweep;
Nor far remov'd their stately camels pace,
Whence from the litters black-eyed houris peep, [leap.
Wave their white arms, and make each warrior's heart to

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XC.

And as the lion caught within a pit
At edge of Arab douar chafes in vain,
While his tormentors round, with fiendish wit,
Hurl stones and fiery brands; thus wrath and pain
Wrung so the Christians, they could scarce restrain
Their anger, and the chieftains' counsels hear:
Meanwhile they see, like some enchanted fane,
Which viewless genii in a night uprear,
The tent of Kerbogah in glittering sheen appear.

XCI.

With airy cupola and minaret,
Gold starr'd, blue pennon droopt from staves of gold,
With proud pavilions, on whose tops were set
Great sun-bright orbs, with many a sweeping fold
Of blue and crimson, with roof which would hold
A thousand in its shade, it seem'd afar
The lighter fancy of such giants old
As built Baalbec or pillar'd Chilmanar—
A gilded home where kings might revel when they war.

XCII.

Southwards it stood upon a rounded height,
A spur upon the mountain's lowest root:
'Mid lanes of tents with silken streamers bright
Pass'd to and fro such pageants as ill suit
With war's stern purpose. Æthiop slaves afoot
Bent 'neath the palanquin, and camels fair
Sustain'd th' hareem's soft splendour; while the lute
And cithern trill'd athwart the murmuring air,
And scarce were stay'd amid the calm of evening prayer.

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XCIII.

There Kerbogah, in luxury and pride,
Rul'd o'er his host, and as his joyful sight
Survey'd th' encampment vast from side to side,
He laugh'd triumphant, and in fell delight
He call'd a scribe to Bagdad thus to write—
"O Caliph of the Faithful, make good cheer,
Let Islàm all be merry day and night;
Let Moslem maidens dry the shameful tear; [here."
'Tween mill-stones will I crush the Christian serpent

XCIV.

Still from the captur'd city's citadel
The aged Akhi Syan kept at bay
The Frankish host, and still he trusted well
To win the town and hold reconquer'd sway.
Full joyous grew he, as day after day
From his aërial height he saw the sweep
Of Islàm's armament. In proud display
He shook the Prophet's standard from the keep;
With shouts the Moslems hail'd the signal from the deep.

XCV.

A path went winding from the rocky base
On which the outworks of the castle stood,
By which, up o'er the cliff's steep, craggy face,
With agile feet and dauntless hardihood,
The Moslem could a dizzy path make good
Unto the citadel, which straightway drew
New succours from without of men and food;
And then adown upon the Franks they flew
Within the town, inflam'd with hopes and frenzy new.

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XCVI.

At length one night, when bright Canopus burn'd
In zenith splendour, and the streets were dumb,
When the Frank sentinel round the fortress yearn'd,
Silent and sleepless, that the watch would come
And take their guard, a sullen stifled hum
Rose, sank, and rose, and sank and nearer crept,
Till burst the roll of the barbarian drum,
And from the citadel a red stream swept
Of fire and armèd men, who o'er the barriers leapt.

XCVII.

Allah el Allah! Allah, Allah, Hu!
Swift dash'd they on with unimpeded feet;
The quenchless fire-balls far and wide they threw,
And burst adown each barricaded street;
And ere the Franks could stem their onset fleet,
They forced their way into a lordly square
Where wealth had rais'd full many a palace seat,
Which stood illumin'd in the torches' glare!
While *Allah Acbar!* rends the red volcanic air.

XCVIII.

But hark! from midnight couch the dreaming Franks
Have leapt, and wild accouter'd, all pell-mell,
Forming at random in impetuous ranks,
By each main street towards the citadel
Dash wildly forth the sortie to repel.
There in that square, two troops from either side
With furious havoc on the Moslem fell;
Then file by file recoil'd the struggling tide,
Leaving the slippery stones with their own life-blood dyed.

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XCIX.

And ever and anon with dext'rous art
The Turks hurl forth their hot artillery,
Greek fire, wreath'd round the javelin and the dart,
And nitrous globes, which deftly flung on high,
Roar out in flames, and bursting as they fly,
In quenchless fragments of soft lava fire
Blaze in resistless strength where'er they lie;
And many a Frank stood like a crimson pyre,
From sole to scalp whirl'd up in one devouring spire.

C.

And then ensued a conflict strange and drear,
For Tancred, rising at alarm's loud call,
Now burst with Bertrand on the Paynim rear;
And save some few who gain'd the fortress wall,
The rest within those streets were prison'd all;
Then the last remnant of explosive grain
Caught in the mass, and one red column tall
Leapt to the skies, then fell to earth again,
Amid the Turks, in spouts of hot volcanic rain.

CI.

Then rush'd the Turk by panic torn along,
And cast his life upon the Frankish sword:
Not one survived of all the desperate throng,
Not one "*Amaun*" would cry to Giaours abhorr'd.
Meanwhile from many a house combustion roar'd;
Where'er the Turks their missile fire had flung,
Red fiery shapes from door and window soar'd,
Then crept along, till on the roof they clung,
And lick'd the rafter'd beams with their destroying tongue.

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CII.

Swiftly the maniac minister of doom
    Leapt up exulting to aërial height,
Engulfing all within its fiery womb,
    And its vast flaring wings of crimson light
    Whirl'd half across the starry dome of night;
More bright than morn their dread effulgence fell
    On the Frank host, all watching with affright,
Whose upturn'd faces look'd as horrible
As those of damnèd ghosts girt round with flames of hell.

CIII.

Throughout the night in devastating path
    The monster roar'd, and shrine and palace sank
In the red jaws of its consuming wrath;
    The carven cedar, polish'd citron plank,
    Hangings of Tyrian hue, the sculptur'd rank
Of Cypriote bronzes and the cornic'd wall
    Of Orient marbles, vanish'd, and the blank
And cinder'd shell of ruin now was all
Left, where Byzantine art had rear'd the Golden Hall.

CIV.

And high above the eddying roar of fire
    Were heard the shrieks and shouts for instant aid,
And women madly, in their night attire,
    Leapt down from roof to roof; some clung and sway'd
    Outside the burning sills, some knelt and pray'd,
Then plung'd down frantic from the parapet:
    Oh! these were scenes of horror which dismay'd
The sternest soldiers, who had never yet
Beheld such forms of woe as were around them set.

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CV.

And gentle hands and ministering care
Were busy round the forms of woe and pain;
And there was one, a maiden soft and fair,
A daughter of the Count of wide Champagne,
Who came and went like some ecstatic strain
Of seraph music, who her life and youth
And angel beauty held in sweet disdain
Before the cause of Christ and human ruth,
Inspir'd with love Divine and Evangelic truth.

CVI.

Gentle Sibylla, who than thou more meet
To be the theme of high heroic song;
But yet what art of song could make more sweet
The praises to thy pure fame which belong?
The vaunted deeds of hardy frames and strong,
To these the Muse may lend resounding grace;
But fit alone for some white spirit's tongue
Are the pure triumphs of thy earthly race,—
The aureole round the brow what mortal art can trace?

CVII.

For she, a saint of Holy Charity,
Dared to enforce her maiden tenderness,
A pilgrim lone upon the earth to be;
And for the wimple white and coarse grey dress,
She chang'd soft luxury's sheen and proud excess;
And she left all which sternest hearts hold dear,
Her father's smile, her mother's dear caress,
And, for her gentle nature did not fear,
Amid the toils and pains which rude men hardly bear;

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CVIII.

Leaving the soft delights which maids adore,
Leaving her chaste couch for the roving tent,
O'er rivers wide, and seas and mountains hoar,
Upon her snow-white palfrey forth she went,
Strong in the armour of a pure intent;
And all men wonder'd how the saintly charm
Of her sweet presence, perfect and unspent
Remain'd 'mid frost and heat and war's alarm,
Its essence seem'd too pure for sun or time to harm.

CIX.

Eternal balm of love and charity,
Who healest all the wounds of strife and hate
And fortune's bitter hurts, in use of thee
The user seems to live immaculate:
Thus Sibyl, though she early watch'd and late,
And like her own, felt for each alien woe,
Soft nurtur'd as became her high estate,
Within contagion's breath unharm'd did go,
Nor lost her angel face its incandescent glow.

CX.

But though her care in mitigating pain
Was mostly spent and by the pallet's side,
Yet not the less upon the battle's plain
Had she been seen all fearlessly to ride;
Sometimes within the arrowy sleet she hied,
And quenching draughts to fainting warriors bore;
And at Nicæa once, a refluent tide
Of Franks she led to face the foe once more,
And her white palfrey's hoofs grew red with Moslem gore.

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CXI.

'Twas said that day that Tancred saw her first
Riding swift back, a warrior troop among;
Her head was bare, her golden hair had burst
Its bonds, and broadly down her shoulders hung,
While to her cheek unwonted lustre clung;
'Twas said the sight had soften'd his stern zeal,
But that away such thoughts he quickly flung,
Yet oft an arrow-wound may seem to heal,
While deep within the flesh is hid the barbèd steel.

CXII.

That night as Sibyl lent her gentle aid
From couch to couch within the palace, where
The moaning hurt were hastily array'd,
One might see Tancred sometime lingering there,
Essay to soothe the accents of despair,
As he upheld, amid the twilight dim,
A cresset's light, and watch'd the busy care
Of leechcraft swathing up the burnèd limb,
Or closing of some wound the torn and livid rim.

CXIII.

And Bertrand too outwatch'd the troubled night,
For all the chiefs had plann'd to make fierce war
Upon the element's advancing flight,
With the assault of lever, axe, and bar,
With beam and battering-ram. In ceaseless jar
Fell house and palace, from foundations raz'd;
Then roar'd the flames in impotence afar,
Their prey remov'd, and ever weaker blaz'd,
Like wild Ambition foil'd, with its own fury craz'd.

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CXIV.

And as chance was, while morn came on apace,
The fire burst forth anew where unsubdued
It rag'd in houses by the market-place,
As Bertrand there his eager way pursued
Along a narrow street, aside he stood
From out a litter's path, which slaves bore by,
Two turban'd slaves white-rob'd and sable-hued,
And from the curtains' close-drawn secresy
Count Bertrand seem'd to hear a lady moan and sigh.

CXV.

There was a softness in her gentle tone
Which gather'd all the blood up in his heart,
More swiftly than the clang'rous trumpet blown
For idlers from the throng'd lists to depart,
And knights to range them for the tourney start;
And on the instant, with imperious air,
He summon'd those swart bearers to impart
The name of their fair burden. Who, aware
Of his demand, thus cried aloud in her despair:

CXVI.

"Help, help, Count Bertrand, help." "O Sainte Marie!"
Burst from the knight, and instant at the sound
Two men in Syrian raiment turn'd to flee,
And at Count Bertrand's mandate on the ground
The slaves set down their burden. With a bound
He reach'd the side,—he stretch'd his hand to draw
The curtains' folds, which closely were enwound,
And then at length—O thou who art the law
Of gentle souls!—O Love, he trembled as he saw.

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CANTO III.

FAMINE.

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CANTO III.

I.

IMMORTAL spirit! whose ecstatic sway
Leads the delighted soul from height to height,
To where the dawn hues of eternal day
Are dimly battling with our senses' night,
To where the glory of the Infinite
We feel around us, e'en as by the blind
Is felt the presence of the morning light,
Effulgent effluence of th' Eternal mind,
Whose joy flows o'er the world like some inconstant wind.

II.

Spirit of Beauty! who upon the cheek
Of woman, and on tree and bursting flower,
On morn, on eve, on moor and mountain peak,
Doth breathe thy being forth from hour to hour;
From which as from a never-ceasing show'r,
All hue and fragrance spring throughout the earth,
The shadow faint of thy immortal pow'r,
Some still there are who 'mid th' ignoble dearth
Of carnal times revere thy evangelic worth.

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III.

And therefore must Chivalric legend sound
Unto their ears an ever-grateful theme,
When she who walks by beauty peerless crown'd
As sovran incarnation, was the dream,
The adoration and the law supreme
Of every manly heart. O glorious Queen,
O Muse of Chivalry, beneath the beam
Of thy true worth what harpy broods obscene
Fell blinded in the soul beneath thy withering sheen!

IV.

Ne'er too did princess in those days of old,
Endiadem'd above the ermin'd press
Of ladies in the lists of cloth of gold,
Sway so the heart with her dear loveliness,
As Innocence in undeserv'd distress;
The tears of virtue then became a charm
Which touch'd the heart with purest nobleness,
And made invincible the knightly arm
Against the dragon's breath or foul enchantment's harm.

V.

Thus when Count Bertrand saw the outrag'd grace
Of Athenäis, saw the fettet'd wrist,
The dark hair streaming o'er the queenly face
And marble shoulder, saw as through a mist
Her fair form's disarray, with wonder whist,
He felt his knighthood rise with passion wild,
And hold him voiceless; then he knelt and kist
Her garment's hem, so trembling, meek, and mild,
That e'en in her distress the lady sadly smil'd.

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VI.

And as it chanc'd in busy haste came by
Adhèmar de Monteil, and with him too
The fair Sibylla, and the pair came nigh
To Athenäis; and e'en as they drew
The gyves from off her wrists, there sudden grew
Swift converse, and they all took earnest thought
For the Princess, who still and still anew
For their protection earnestly besought;
"He yet is near," she said, "who hath this evil wrought."

VII.

She sprang adown in lowly suppliant guise,
And took Sibylla's hand within her own,
Searching for pity in her gentle eyes;
Then look'd she round and spoke in breathless tone,
"Have pity, friend, and leave me not alone,
No, not an instant, for an ancient hate
Pursues me, and a fiend, ah! too well known,
The murderer of my race, for end of state
Would hold me captive here and bind me to his fate."

VIII.

And then as though her brain could never bear
The thoughts fantasmal of a frightful past,
She press'd her white hands o'er her streaming hair,
And veil'd her eyes a moment, then aghast
Her looks around with quiv'ring lips she cast;
Then with wild eyes and swift convulsive throe,
She spoke of deeds so ghastly, that at last
They deem'd her frenzied, for belief comes slow
When first we hear some tale of unexampled woe.

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IX.

Then spake Sibylla: "Lady, have good cheer,
And calm your spirit from its wild alarm,
For I and those who stand before you here
Will guard you as ourselves from further harm."
Her simple speech had such a soothing charm,
That as the lilies rise when spring's cold dew
Is shaken from their cups by south winds warm,
So Athenäis felt her hopes anew
Lift their bent heads and glow with life's intenser hue.

X.

And soon a crowd of gazers gather'd round,
Among them King Tafûr, wildly deck'd out
With spoils and robes of Moslem, which he wound
In strange device his mighty form about,
And with him many of his rabble rout,
Red with the heat and stain'd with lees of wine;
And Bertrand call'd unto that giant lout,
That from his fellows he should gather nine
To be their guard where'er the Princess might assign.

XI.

And well it was, for of the outward foe
A swift alarm upon the city fell,
And all the streets were hurtling with the flow
Of arm'd men rushing to the walls pell-mell;
The mighty catapult and mangonel
Were torn along the stones by sinewy strain
Of brawny arms, and all that could repel
Assault, the stone, the beam, war's lumber train,
Slid from the lever's thrust or roll'd on groaning wain.

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XII.

And those rude servitors to Sibyl were
So loyal, that no better guards could be
Amid the city's hot tumultuous stir.
And for those few they made a passage free
Amid the jostling crowd with busy glee,
For it seem'd good to bring the Princess straight
To Sibyl's home, which erst a nunnery
Had been, before the Moslem victor's hate
Had torn the sculptur'd cross from o'er the convent gate.

XIII.

Thither they bent their steps and pass'd within:
An inner court enclos'd in cloister'd square
A garden, where the weeds crawl'd rank and thin
Above neglected flower-beds black and bare,
And in the midst, against the azure air,
Four cypress trees their dark green cones upbore
About a broken well. Sibylla there
Had found a resting place, with many more
Fair pilgrims who likewise Christ's blessèd symbol wore.

XIV.

Nor farther De Monteil or Bertrand went
Than where the guard stood round the front gateway.
But Sibyl to an inner tenement
Led Athenäis, and upon their way
They met a maiden clad in the array
Which Moslem women use. With joyful cry
The maidens met; the Princess knew straightway
The fair Ayesha, whom about to die
She saw, that fatal eve, with Bertrand passing by.

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XV.

They wound around the cloisters of that square,
Then turn'd and enter'd at a lofty door
Which open'd to a hall of brilliance rare;
The mellow sunbeam lay across the floor
Of chequer'd marble, glittering walls upbore
The fretted roof; here the refectory
Was of the convent erst, but now no more
It look'd fit haunt for simple piety,
Prankt in the gilt parade of Orient luxury.

XVI.

For here, where saintly Chastity had pray'd
Before the Virgin's lamp-lit shrine of gold,
The Turk Sultàn had his seraglio made,
And warm'd with love unbless'd his pulses old.
Thence passing on, Sibylla backwards roll'd
A lattice gate, which led from out the hall
Along a gallery, till their steps they hold
Within a chamber, where the sunbeams fall
On saffron couches rang'd along the marble wall.

XVII.

And there Sibylla and Ayesha each
Essay'd to calm the lady's beating heart
By gentle ministration and kind speech,
For love can ever with endearing art
Take the worst sting from deep affliction's smart,
Which left alone more deeply ever sears.
Then Sibyl pray'd that lady to impart
The reason of her sorrows and her fears,
While thus her tale she told into their list'ning ears.

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XVIII.

"In Athens was I born, and still in dreams
I love to live my infant days again,
Where the Cephissus, sweetly murm'ring, streams
Beneath the olive, ilex, and the plane;
For o'er the mountains, o'er the Ægean main,
A glory seem'd the radiant air to fill,
To gild each grove and every marble fane,
As though the smile of Venus liv'd there still,
And all Harmonia's Nine but slept beside the rill.

XIX.

"Within the city, Adrian, my sire,
Rul'd in the shadow of th' Imperial name;
Born almost in the purple, his desire
Ne'er felt ambition's heart-consuming flame.
Though he was valiant, and his glorious fame
In battle's onset was a charm to quell
The foeman's courage, yet Alexis' claim
He favour'd when his uncle Michael fell
From empire, and exchang'd his throne for convent cell.

XX.

"My sire soon after did in manhood's prime
The youngest sister of Alexis wed,
My mother Zoë. As the marriage chime
Throughout Byzantium with the tidings fled,
Old men grew gay and tears of rapture shed.
'For now Love's feet,' they cried, 'have bruis'd for aye
The head of faction, and no more shall spread
Barbarians to our walls with pale dismay,
Since Ducas and Comnenus friends are made to-day.'

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XXI.

"Then did Alexis to my father grant
To rule o'er Athens in imperial pride,
And I grew up like some exotic plant,
Screen'd from the blasts which mortal life betide;
And as the bees in Mount Hymettus' side
The sweetest honey of the world upstore,
So do my thoughts within my memory hide
The rapture of those days; O evermore
My spirit lingers round each temple, grot and shore.

XXII.

"And now when fourteen springs had come and gone,
And all my rip'ning girlhood had enwove
Endearing memories around each stone
Of old Athenæ, and each olive grove
And streamlet had a separate tale of love
For my young fancy,—Greece shriek'd, panic-tost,
Since Solimàn with many a countless drove
Of Turkish horsemen o'er th' Euphrates crost,
And all Armenia's realm seem'd then for ever lost.

XXIII.

"My sire straightway the post of danger sought
Upon the frontier east, for chief command
Design'd at once in every patriot's thought;
And when we left that dear delightful land,
And from the ship I saw the pleasant strand
Fade from my eyes, I first felt life's dark gloom
In funeral pall o'er Childhood's heav'n expand.
Northwards we sail'd till from the Euxine loom
The towers of Trebizond: thence pass'd we to Erzroum.

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XXIV.

"My father left us for the tented plain,
And his victorious skill in many a fray
Restor'd the conduct of the lost campaign;
And then Byzant had triumph'd 'neath his sway,
Had not a traitor chief one ill-starr'd day
Let through a Toorkman squadron to our rear,
Drawing his phalanx scathelessly away.
Scarce from the havoc of the Moslem's spear
My sire escaped to us, his foemen following near.

XXV.

"Beleaguer'd then we lay within Erzroum
Month after month,—while Soliman Ghazee
O'erran the realms which Moslem call of Roum,
From Rome, who held the subject world in fee;
My sire was urg'd by dire extremity
To yield the town, with its long famine spent,
Unto the Moslem, who a passage free
To him and all his train most willing lent:
With feeble escort forth to Trebizond we went.

XXVI.

"A long and painful march before us lay
Across Armenia's rugged mountain chain;
The iron feet of steeds and mules gave way,
Worn to the quick the limping beasts sustain
No more their burden. Then with trembling pain
On tender feet fair women toil'd along;
Joyful one eve we hail'd a water'd plain
Where bosky dells and woodlands rang with song
Of tuneful birds, which sooth'd our gall'd and weary throng.

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XXVII.

"All rush'd in rapture to a river side,
There on a lawny space beside the stream
We lay our fainting limbs, and in the tide
Some lav'd their feet, some slept, and in their dream
Already saw their home,—when rose a scream
From maids who heard behind the trampling feet
Of horses in the wood, and saw the gleam
Of lances; and in onset fierce and fleet
Dash'd forth a furious troop on our unarm'd retreat;

XXVIII.

"And at their head was he that traitor black
Who had betray'd my sire in open fight;
And now, sweet friends, I must awhile turn back:
This, this was he who like some demon sprite
Pursues my life and haunts me day and night;
This, this was he from whose dread power to-day
Ye freed me, through whose fix'd and murd'rous spite
I mourn both sire and mother. Ah, I pray,
Bear with these tears which still the tale calls forth alway.

XXIX.

"Amid the maidens rich with beauty's dower,
Who knelt in prayer 'neath Saint Sophia's dome,
Fair was Irene as a passion-flower.
One day the damsel left her humble home
To lead her grandsire to the Hippodrome;
When all the streets were jostling with the tide
Of curious sight-seers rushing like the foam
Of mountain cataracts, she vainly tried
A wilful aged man from danger's path to guide.

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xxx.

"And while Irene struggled in the whirl
Of unregarded crowds, there was a cry,
'Room for th' Imperial Chariot:' from the swirl
As the thick press on either side drew by
In her distraction wild she sought to fly,
With nervous haste her grandsire in the street
Stumbled and fell; in half-blind agony
Irene saw the white steeds' trampling feet
Upon her grandsire's form, her pulses ceased to beat.

xxxi.

"And when she woke from out her death-like trance,
She found herself within the chariot laid,
And on her eyes was bent a gentle glance,
This was my mother Zoë, who allay'd
The shudd'ring anguish of the wond'ring maid,
While she assur'd her grandsire's hurt would be
Of little import, since the reins had stay'd
The chariot's wheels; and deeply mov'd was she
With young Irene's grace and sweet simplicity.

xxxii.

"And from that day within my mother's love
Irene found a shelter, and she took
Unto our home this lorn and guileless dove
When life her aged grandsire's frame forsook;
And like some elder sister would she look
On the light joyaunce of my infant days,
Or read from Attic or Homeric book,
Or lead my steps along the flowery ways
By grove of Academe or Salaminian bays.

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XXXIII.

"And as she grew in womanhood the grace
Of spotless purity and heavenly truth
Smooth'd her white brow, and beam'd from out her face,
And all who gazed on her would feel in sooth
Their hearts dissolve with such surpassing ruth
As those do feel who gaze upon the round
And argent moon, and passion's restless tooth
Ceas'd then to gnaw, as though some charmèd sound
The serpents of the soul had in enchantment bound.

XXXIV.

"Thus at Erzroum her heavenly beauty beam'd
Within the dark recesses of a heart
To hers almost unlike, but still it seem'd
That Love had touch'd at once with random dart
Two hearts more diverse than the raven swart
Is from the white plum'd dove; yet that dark brow,
Which seems but fit to play the tyrant's part,
Can gentlest minds with tender thoughts endow,
And thus it fared, it seem'd, with sweet Irene now.

XXXV.

"And he who thus had cross'd her guileless life,
Was an Armenian prince, who at Erzroum
Liv'd with his brother, and strange tales were rife
Of their wild orgies; scarce their father's tomb
Had clos'd, men whisper'd, when their banquet room
Rang to the midnight riot, and 'twas said
They drank in triumph to the coming doom
Of Moslem conquest, since with equal dread
Or equal scorn they look'd on Christ and Mohammed.

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XXXVI.

"Yet Zohrab, such the maiden's lover's name,
Was not all evil then; had fate been kind
Perchance Irene's love, with its pure flame,
Had charm'd the rebel passions of his mind;
And he had beauty, but of that strange kind
Which once was Lucifer's. His bloodless cheek,
His quiv'ring lip, show'd not the will resign'd,
But that imperious nature which would seek
Revenge on all the world for wrong or fortune's freak.

XXXVII.

"For he had suffer'd wrong,—his vast estate
By law or fraud had been half reft away,
And he was anger'd e'en against the fate
Which made him scion of this latter day,
When all around seem'd crumbling to decay;
And desperation drove his passions mad,
Which like wild horses knew nor curb nor sway,
For Hope nor Faith within his soul he had
Amid the world's despair, an age corrupt and bad.

XXXVIII.

"Yet a new spirit seem'd in him transfus'd
With sweet Irene's love, a shamèd sense
Of genius wrong'd, and noble gifts abus'd;
Now would he talk with magic eloquence,
Vow Spartan virtues were the sole defence
Against the empire's e'er increasing foes;
And good men joy'd to see the zeal intense
With which his sleeping ardour now arose,
For all had fear'd the strength which did in him repose.

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XXXIX.

"And oft he vow'd upon Irene's hand
That she had won him to the patriot's part;
And she, perchance, to God and Fatherland
Devoted then herself with guileless art;
Half wishing and half fearing, her pure heart
Drank in a fair illusion, when he vow'd
Troth not rejected as he would depart
For combat where amid the warrior crowd
A tow'r of strength he was, with courage fierce and proud.

XL.

"But Oh! the fiend himself is not more strong
Than ill-repute to pull the convert back,
And forge suspicion out of ancient wrong;
This Zohrab felt, for aye an envious pack
At each small fault painted in hues more black
His ancient life, till one unlucky day
When some reverse had barr'd our onward track,
Men drown'd with cries of treason their dismay,
And call'd for Zohrab's head, since he had lost the fray.

XLI.

"And giddy Rumour, who the tale retold
With lifted brows to every anxious ear,
Added new crimes to each suspicion old;
Men turn'd away whenever he drew near,
And look'd askance with mingled hate and fear.
Back to Erzroum he came one fatal day,
And found Irene, whom the tidings drear
Had smit with mingled sorrow and dismay,
Within a convent's walls had fled from him away.

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XLII.

"The slumb'ring monsters of the nether deep
Of his dark nature now rise up again,
And through his mind impetuously sweep;
Again he gathered round him the old train,
Comrades abandon'd, reckless and profane;
His brother joy'd the convert back to see,
For there had discord been betwixt the twain;
Thus goaded was he unto treachery,
And of our overthrow th' occasion foul to be.

XLIII.

"For as I said of that disastrous flight,
Which brought the foe in triumph to our gate,
He was the traitor cause, and day and night,
Around the town in siege, his restless hate
To work us mischief ever laid in wait;
And when my sire at length was fain to yield,
Full wroth was Zohrab at our easy fate,
By which my sire, his guards and household train
Were free to go, and he not one could there retain.

XLIV.

"So then Irene forth with us we took;
But when two days had pass'd upon our flight,
Zohrab, who ill the maiden's loss could brook,
A robber troop had gather'd in the night
Without the town, and, in equipment light,
Swift riding on our weary steps they came,
And us they reach'd e'en as the sweet delight
Of rest was stealing through each toil-worn frame, [lame.
And all the guards lay down, distress'd, footsore and

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XLV.

"My sire his gilded cuirass from his breast
Had loosen'd, when he heard the outcry drear,
Within his tent on pard skins stretch'd at rest;
He rush'd without, bareheaded, seiz'd his spear,
Untether'd his black war-steed who stood near,
Replac'd the bit within his teeth, and swang
Upon his back, then, turning to the rear,
Called to his guards, who rose up at the clang,
And swift upon the foe in furious onset sprang.

XLVI.

"O Pity! in what region wert thou then,
That thou didst suffer my young maiden eyes
To see the evils wrought by demon men!
O Sun! and stood'st thou steadfast in the skies!
O mother Earth! and didst thou not arise
And gulf the miscreants down! Ah! no, no, no!
All, all immovable, in ancient wise
Wore smiling face. While I—I felt the blow
Crush brain and heart and soul, and freeze my pulse's flow.

XLVII.

"My mother with me and Irene, near
The tent-door stood, we saw my father fall
Thrust through the body by a Koordish spear,
And that dear head sword-smitten, like a ball
Roll'd on the sward; one on his spear-shaft tall
Lifted the face ador'd;—ah, ah, no more,
No more I saw, for then oblivion's pall
Clos'd round my senses;—when my swoon was o'er,
I found that I had lost all that I lov'd of yore.

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XLVIII.

"Our foes had gone, and all about were spread
The rifled packs with clammy gore besprent,
And wailing mourners cower'd o'er the dead.
Two maidens of my mother o'er me bent
Their sorrowing looks. In ghastly wonderment
I felt I knew that from the world for aye
Faces belov'd were gone;—within the tent
Those maidens tended me that night and day,
For all were buried there ere yet we went our way.

XLIX.

"Later I heard how my dear mother's life
Ebb'd forth beneath some wild barbarian sword:
Vainly she threw, to stay their reckless strife,
Her gems and gold amid the robber horde.
Nor did Irene to the arms abhorr'd
Of Zohrab come; her kneeling down he found
Beside my mother's form stretch'd on the sward,
She tried to stanch the red stream as it wound
From her cut brow o'er cheek and shoulder to the ground.

L.

"And when she saw that all her gentle art
Was vain, she laid her mistress gently down,
And Zohrab call'd 'Irene;'—with a start
She leapt unto her feet,—from head to crown
All trembling as some linnet whom the clown
Clutches in harden'd palm, she shriek'd i' th' air,
Then fled,—he following clutch'd her flowing gown,
She fell upon bent knees, her visage fair
Leaning upon her hands stone-still in silent prayer.

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LI.

"Then Zohrab closer drew and plac'd his hand
Upon her shoulder, but she sway'd aside,
And pluck'd a dagger 'neath her white robe's band,
And struck it deep into her maiden side;
And as death's numbness 'gan to creep and glide
O'er all her sense, upon one arm she leant,
Then fell, one cheek to earth, and mutely died,
Leaving one hand behind her languid bent,
As on some martyr maid's well carven monument.

LII.

"All this I gather'd from the maidens twain
Who led me to Byzantium, and in dream,
(So oft I made them tell that tale again,)
All present to my sense the scene would seem,
And sleep fled shatter'd at my own wild scream;
But as the days pass'd by my sorrow waned:
Hallow'd by time became the piteous theme,
While in the Golden city I remain'd,
For me the Empress there within her care retain'd.

LIII.

"Yet in th' Imperial Court my spirit fail'd
At the gilt rottenness, the mask'd decay,
The scented breath of ruin I inhal'd,
Corruption's bane which eat the State away,
And vice and servitude in link'd array:
For at Athenæ with the mighty dead
I held high converse, and the glorious ray
Of Antique Freedom had my spirit fed
As round those glorious shrines my maiden steps were led.

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LIV.

"Some while I bore the deep disgust I felt,
Till leave I won to quit th' Imperial Court;
And ever since in Cyprus have I dwelt,
Where my sire built a palace for resort,
Beside Arsinoë's rock-embosom'd port;
And there my days pass'd onwards free from blame,
In pensive earnest or in gentle sport,
Amid my chosen friends, till lately came
A message from Byzant my presence there to claim.

LV.

"At the Imperial Court I then remain'd,
For so Alexis will'd it for awhile,
But soon again my supplications gain'd
Leave to return to my fair Cypriote isle:
We left the Golden Horn, and many a mile
Beyond the Hellespont our swift bark flew
On snowy wing, when northwards from the Nile,
Winds on our course a Moslem pirate threw,
Who brought me captive here with all our Cypriote crew.

LVI.

"Thee here, Ayesha, Heaven be thank'd, I found,
Who hast preserv'd me in captivity
From all the evils which beset me round;
Yet, O Ayesha, still not e'en to thee
Did I impart one dread discovery—
Scarce to myself I dared the truth allow;
One here I found in high authority
Wearing the turban on his shaven brow:
He, that was Zohrab erst, is Moseilama now.

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LVII.

"And he it was—it could no other be—
Who did my seizure two days since command;
For though a cloud of ruffian mystery
Was wrapp'd about the deed, the dastard hand
Which slew Count Bertrand's page, the caitiff band
Who seiz'd us in the instant when alone,
Me and my maidens,—ah! the deed was plann'd
By those to whom the city was well known,
Although the cross of Red upon their vests was sewn.

LVIII.

"They led us round by ways they knew full well,
While all our cries pass'd idly as the wind
Amid that eve's confusion horrible;
Full well I knew, as I look'd once behind,
Him in disguise, whom my quick fears design'd;
They brought us to a palace where we three,
Tended by slaves in silence, were confin'd,
And when this morning flames close by they see,
I was in bonds borne where that Frank knight set me free."

LIX.

Then spake Ayesha. "Ah, a ghastly chill
Oft held me breathless when I saw the man,
Yet not his cruel eye, his aspect ill
Avail'd so much, but him, so whisper ran,
As chief Fedai for his foul hateful clan
Hassàn ben Sabah chose;"—a silent stound
Fell on them at the name,—with face more wan
Each look'd on each, and lightly glanc'd around,
As though they fear'd the walls would tremble at the sound.

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LX.

"Ah, then," sigh'd Athenäis, "all is plain,
In our captivity the constant screen
Of mystery around us, the sweet strain
Of hidden music, as by hands unseen
The banquet rose before us,—ah, I ween
'Twas strange, full strange, conviction told me not
He was of that dark sect whose name has been
The terror of these days;—a fouler blot
Upon the order of the world, time never yet begot.

LXI.

"And now I know that, for some secret ends,
Th' Assassin tribe would have me in their sway,
I shall not rest by day or night, dear friends,
This horror so upon my sense will prey.
Oh! would that fate would open me a way
Unto my island home. There, only there
Can I know peace." Sibylla said, "Ah stay
Thy fears, sweet lady, for in such despair [are."
There lurks distrust of Heav'n from whom our fortunes

LXII.

Then follow'd converse, with swift interchange
Of question on the present and the past,
And in communion deep their memories range
O'er all the tumult of the time. And fast
The sunbeams more aslant their radiance cast,
E'en as they talk'd. And when all three took thought
For Athenäis, they resolv'd at last
To wait until the morrow ere they sought
The leaders of the hosts, to aid their plans in aught.

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LXIII.

Thus Athenäis pass'd that eve and night,
Amid those convent walls, well served in all
Which pilgrim maids could give, who felt delight
In kindly emulation at the call
Of hospitality: and sleep let fall
Her opiate calms across life's billowy streams,
And earth had rest beneath night's dewy pall,
While the fair Princess visited in dreams
Her island palace, rear'd of fancy's golden beams.

LXIV.

And on the morrow Athenäis rose,
And with Ayesha waited the return
Of Sibyl, who had early shunn'd repose,
For aye her heart from Love's unfailing urn
Ran o'er with kindly thought,—she went to learn
Of Godfrey when he might allow the boon
Of audience to the Princess, then to turn
Her steps to tend the sick,—thus ere the noon
A herald came to tell, his chief would follow soon.

LXV.

De Bouillon came,—already he knew well
Her story from Sibylla, and in thought
He marvell'd at the will inscrutable
Of Heav'n, by which the daintiest heads are brought
Within the sweep of destiny;—he sought
To reassure her, wond'ring at her rare
And queenlike beauty; pity deeply wrought
Upon his noble heart, to see her there,
Brought down from high estate the captive's lot to share.

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LXVI.

And much he question'd of that Renegade,
    And said that on the nearest council day
His life should be in its foul truth display'd,
    And he gave hope full soon to find a way,
    Amid the throng'd besiegers' vast array,
To send the Princess back across the sea
    Unto her island home. He went away,
Making obeisance with all courtesy
As did befit a prince and noblest Chivalry.

LXVII.

And when Sibylla came, the maidens three
    Ascended to the walls, and walking round
Look'd o'er the Moslem host unto the sea;
    Then at the Lion Gate they heard a sound
    Of shout and clamour, there they went and found
Some thirty Toorkman lances drawn up near,
    The chiefs in front, with spikèd steel cap crown'd,
Waved in defiance the long tufted spear,
And call'd the Franks to fight with many a shout and jeer.

LXVIII.

Down from the gate an answering cheer arose,
    Which on the walls was caught up by the crowd,
"*Montjoie, St. George!*" Upon the Moslem foes
    A Frankish troop rode forth, with heads down bow'd,
    Three ranks of six abreast their horses strode,
Together all as one to match the flight
    Of two who in advance six lance-lengths rode,
Roger de Barneville one, a Norman knight
Who bore Count Robert's flag beside him in the fight.

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LXIX.

The other was Count Bertrand;—as they came,
The Toorkman chief, the Toorkman squadron fled;
The Frankish horses, breathing smoke and flame,
With nostrils stretch'd and fetlock wide outspread,
Pursued them round a tangled willow bed,
Whence in the rear leapt up from ambuscade
Three hundred Afghan bowmen, to the head
Drawing the barbèd shafts, while some array'd
Themselves to bar retreat with spear and long lance blade.

LXX.

And as the arrows in pursuing flight
Fell round the Franks, they saw the foe's deceit;
And other horse were creeping into sight
Around a wooded knoll,—in quick retreat
The Frank chiefs wheel'd about,—the arrowy sleet
Fell harmless in new volley,—smit with fear
The Paynim foot fell back, none dared to meet
The Frankish fury, only from the rear
The bowman drew his shaft red-feather'd to the ear.

LXXI.

Onward they went, but ere the gate was won,
Count Bertrand drew the rein, and looking back
He miss'd De Barneville, who behind alone
Came riding last upon their homeward track.
Him had an arrow wounded in the back,
Just where the scull is hing'd upon the spine;
He clutch'd the pommel till his hold grew slack,
Then down to earth he fell, seeking to twine
His fingers in the dust, he gasp'd, and lay supine.

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LXXII.

And as the wolves rush forth, a famish'd pack,
Upon some traveller plodding o'er the snow,
Beside a wood of pines with horror black,
At night's swift fall, thus flock the Paynim foe
Around the fallen knight in clam'rous flow.
Then Bertrand turn'd, but all too distant lay
The corpse to save from insult, for a blow
Of Afghan sabre smote the head away,
A horseman with his lance then spear'd the ghastly prey.

LXXIII.

But swift away the Moslem multitude,
As Bertrand spurr'd towards them, fled again,
And left the body weltering in its blood.
He down alit upon the gory plain,
While round about him fell the arrowy rain,
And as the headless trunk he quickly threw
Athwart his saddle-bow, from each neck vein
And artery the crimson stream well'd through;
Then backwards to the town the Frank chief spurr'd anew.

LXXIV.

With rage and grief the Christians from the wall
Beheld the Moslems sweeping up once more;
The Paynims waved the grisly head o'er all
Rear'd on a lance; in rapid haste they bore
A catapult, fix'd it with wedge and shore,
Then on the giant spring they placed the head,
And, laughing out in wild barbarian roar,
Let go the catch,—the hideous missile fled
Within the walls, not far from where the trunk was spread.

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LXXV.

De Barneville had a sire, bent, old and grey,
Within the host,—he mourn'd beside the bier
Where stretch'd the headless form already lay:
They brought to him those lineaments so dear:
He, when he saw the ghastly spoil appear,
Rose with wide arms not joyless at the view:
He kiss'd the forehead, and with trembling tear
Cried, "O my Son, for thee I do not rue,
Thou hast the meed which is to Christian martyr due.

LXXVI.

"And Heaven I thank that, of its bounteous grace,
It now has granted all I dared to crave,
To close thine eyes, compose the cherish'd face,
Thy soilèd locks from blood and dust to lave,
And lay thy dear form in an honour'd grave
Whole as thou liv'dst. Thus shall I think of thee
Embalm'd in sorrow's grace, till Christ who gave
Shall take this life away, and I shall see
The palm within thine hands in His dear company."

LXXVII.

All joy'd to see the old man's holy hope
In such affliction; on the morrow morn
The son was buried 'neath the lofty cope
Of great St. Peter's dome. The corpse was borne
By warriors to the grave, the doleful horn
Between the chanted psalms was pealèd forth,
Priests, monks and abbots sang,—few fail'd to mourn,
With that bereav'd old man and his son's worth
In talk subdued was prais'd as he was laid in earth.

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LXXVIII.

Then day by day the Moslem bolder grew;
And as in summer when the red kine wait
Within the pool, on them the flies anew
Swarm angry at repulse, so at each gate,
From early dawn into the twilight late,
Th' assault was aye renew'd, with shields close lock'd
Above their heads they heav'd the mighty weight
Of batt'ring ram, the solid ramparts rock'd, [shock'd.
Until with beam hurl'd down the troop fell thunder-

LXXIX.

A wooden tow'r, an outwork on the West,
Stood near the gate. There Tancred stood at bay
Against a host of Moslems, who had prest
Between him and the city. In dismay
The Franks beheld red fiery flick'rings play
Along the tow'r's black side, for Turks had crush'd
Fire through the beams. Then Godfrey in array
Drew up five hundred knights, and outwards rush'd
As all around the tow'r the red flames upwards gush'd.

LXXX.

At first the Christians clove in torrent wrath
Way through the Moslem, but from far and wide
The crush came round them, till, like foamy froth,
Battling beneath a cataract, they bide
In hurtling fury. From the farther side
Then Tancred hew'd with his small band a way
Unto his chief, athwart the Moslem tide,
And safe retreat was made, but in the fray [day.
Two hundred slaughter'd knights won martyr-crown that

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LXXXI.

And from that time, as happens with the best,
The fervour of the host awhile grew chill,
And men's hearts yearn'd to know a little rest;
And Egypt's embassy who linger'd still
Within the town, said now their Caliph's will
Was that they should return: then on debate
The chiefs decreed, in Fortune's aspect ill,
With the Egyptians to send some to wait
Upon the Caliph's self, his schemes to penetrate.

LXXXII.

The men of Cairo made a three days' truce,
By mediation, that they forth might wend:
Days, which the worn Crusaders too might use
Upon the bodies of the slain to spend
All pious care; all greeted like the end
Of toil this pause in their adversity;
And so it seem'd occasion fit to send
The Princess Athenäis o'er the sea,
Unto her home in Cyprus with the embassy.

LXXXIII.

At earliest dawn the western city gate
Let forth a crowd of nobles in array,
Around the Princess; by her side there sate
The fair Ayesha, and they took their way
Across the Moslem camp unto the bay
With carrack, bark, and galley sprinkled o'er,
The sea shone blue beneath the growing day
As she embark'd, and with the bending oar
The rowers lift the boat in concert from the shore.

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LXXXIV.

Then grew the siege anew, the raging flood
Of Moslem roll'd around the walls and bound
The city close, so that no longer food,
No mules and camels came with tinkling sound
Of bells within the gates, and slowly wound
Unto the market place with well-pil'd freight
Of harvest of the field and garden-ground;
Both night and day before each city gate
Was aye the Paynim found in jealous watch to wait.

LXXXV.

Then came a time when knightly arm was nought,
And in the fell assault of evils new
In vain were deeds of wondrous prowess wrought;
For grisly Famine, with her vampire crew,
And Pestilence with lips of livid blue,
Flew through the host, and warmest hearts grew chill,
As they beheld these shapes of horrid hue,
Which in their faces glar'd with aspect ill,
And groan'd and laugh'd and shriek'd and yell'd in triumph [shrill.

LXXXVI.

All store of food soon grew so scarce and small,
That corn was paid for by its weight in gold,
And loathliest carrion at each market stall
For famish'd crowds was daily weigh'd and sold:
Reptiles, and scum, and garbage, sandals old,
The hides of ass and camel, nothing loth
Were men to gnaw from out the graveyard mould
The nettles, darnels and rank overgrowth,
Which on Corruption's field were nurs'd in giant sloth.

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LXXXVII.

Then were there scenes of horror which outstrip
The Thyestèan banquet. Life's warm tide
Drain'd from the dying with a quivering lip,
And madness wolf-like, gaunt and fiery eyed,
All unappeas'd with human pasture, cried
And howl'd beneath the sun: some the swift bane
Of fiery thirst o'ertakes; the hot flames glide
In agonising flow through heart and vein, [brain.
And sear with quenchless fire the eyeball, breast, and

LXXXVIII.

And wither'd, black, no longer like to man,
But demons gaunt with long and matted hair,
With open mouths along the streets some ran,
And madd'ning ever in the sun's hot glare,
They look'd from side to side with frantic stare
For water, and to drink the mantled pool,
And of the loathsome kennel did not spare;
And some with palates scorch'd like burning wool,
Into th' Orontes leapt their fiery pain to cool.

LXXXIX.

And then the chieftains gave command to kill
Or bind each maniac as the fit came on;
And in the streets was silence dread and still.
A deathly silence, ever and anon
Broken by sigh, sob, groan or malison,
Utter'd by sufferers mourning o'er their fate
Within their houses, till at length not one
Was seen abroad; in apathetic state, [sate.
Like cow'd and crouching beasts within their walls they

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XC.

And if once Fancy rais'd awhile the pall
Of stupor from the brain, men dream'd of nought
But of rich banquets held in bower or hall,
Of savours manifold; and when they thought
Of viands lately wasted, all distraught
With frenzy new they gnash'd their teeth upon
Their lean long fingers, and in fury sought
To gnaw their shrunken flesh with shriek and groan;
Some, ere they died, had torn their own limbs to the bone.

XCI.

And in his comrade's face none dar'd to look;
All shunn'd the image of their own woe set
Upon another's brow. Sons could not brook
To look upon their sires; and brothers met,
And pass'd, and spoke not; mothers only yet
Gaz'd on their babes, and tried to stay their cries
With proffer of the breast, the child to wet
Its parch'd lips vainly sought with closing eyes,
And as the mother died Heav'n took the child likewise.

XCII.

And every morn the dead of the past night,
And of the day the dead at each nightfall
Were found in greater numbers,—and to fight,
To watch the gates, or man the city wall,
Few came at greatest need;—the herald's call
And e'en the foe's loud insults were all vain
To rouse those bound in apathy's close thrall;
And such as came their weight could scarce sustain
With sword or lance, but crawl'd in feebleness and pain.

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XCIII.

And many a knight was fain at length to slay,
With tears and bitterness of heart, his steed,
The dear companion of his pilgrim way,
The trusty partner in the victor meed
Of many a combat,—when the ruthless deed
Was done, he turn'd with loathing from the board,
And others ate. To help the common need,
The richer chieftains drain'd their money hoard,
Yet into Famine's jaws is gold all vainly pour'd.

XCIV.

Thus far'd the host, as day by day on high
The July sun its pitiless wrath shot down
On the hot streets, and some essay'd to fly
Across the Turks, and quit the fated town;
They, hewn in pieces, were by engines thrown
Back o'er the walls. Amid this dread despair
Came two who cross'd the Paynim camp unknown,
And from without such evil tidings bare,
As made e'en present woes more hopeless aspect wear.

XCV.

For one hope yet, one beam of light, had play'd
Athwart the dark abyss of misery:
All deem'd that marching to their instant aid
Two armies came, and trusted soon to see
Byzantian ranks in brazen panoply,
Under Alexis, rout the Paynim host;
Or else the pride of Northern chivalry,
From Denmark, Norway, and the Frisian coast,
Who, led by Eric, now the Taurus must have cross'd.

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XCVI.

But all curs'd loud, in wild rebellious heat,
At tidings that the false and fickle Greek,
At news of their disaster made retreat,
And with the Turks alliance fain would seek.
But deeper anguish rous'd the woful shriek,
When it was told of Eric, royal Dane,
How all his host at Istakàr the beak
Of Asian vultures fed upon the plain,
O'er which the mountain peaks look on the Syrian main.

XCVII.

Of Olaf, was King Eric only child,
Of Olaf, Dane sea-king, whose dragon prow,
Like some red meteor, carried panic wild
Where'er it sprung to light. He took a vow
All idol fanes in ruin down to throw
Throughout the North, and utterly to quell
All Odin worship. But the heathen foe,
In one great sea-fight met him, and he fell,
And his land was the prey of Northern infidel.

XCVIII.

Clear-fac'd with youth's bright morn, brown-lock'd, blue-
Eric liv'd then in courtly blandishment, [eyed,
With cheek by joy and health vermilion-dyed;
Him to the Kaiser's court his sire had sent
To breathe the ages' high and pure intent,
The spirit, glow and grace of chivalry,
Mid noble knights and ladies; there he spent
The golden dawn of manhood, there was he
When his sire died in arms upon the Baltic Sea.

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XCIX.

Benumb'd at first by this relentless blow
Of destiny, his soul grew strong and grave,
And he sware inwardly his garb of woe
Never to lay aside unless he drave
The heathen from his land. With comrades brave,
The noblest knights of Denmark and Almayne,
He won full many a fight by land and wave
Ere he had gain'd his kingdom back again, [reign.
Where then he thought in peace with her he lov'd to

C.

For ah, that power which ever noblest seems
To noblest natures, did not fail to sing
Its fairy music to his youth's fond dreams,—
That soft desire which, with eternal wing,
Doth bear existence high above the sting
Of Earth's dark passions to a purer air,
Had like the soft breath of a Southern spring,
Thrilling two harpstrings in a concord fair,
Made two most equal hearts in one like yearning share.

CI.

'Twas the old tale which is for ever young.
When he was page, there was a dark-hair'd maid
Named Adelaïde, who was rear'd among
The high-born ladies who were aye array'd
Around the empress' throne; in hall or glade
Where hounds gave tongue or falcon flutter'd free,
He met her often, lov'd her, and he paid
Her homage, as became her high degree,—
A daughter of the dukes of wide-spread Burgundy.

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CII.

Theirs was the love frank, free, sincere and strong
Of noble souls who answer each to each,
As well-tim'd cadence to heroic song,
Or clearest echo unto noble speech;
Love such as scheming hearts can never reach;
Of virtue, beauty, fair unconscious birth,
As pure as adamant from flaw or breach,
Which knows no fear, distrust, or wanton mirth,—
Bas'd on strong manly truth and woman's noblest worth.

CIII.

Thus when young Eric went, the heathen foe
To combat, and to win his crown again,
She shed no tear, she could not love him so,—
Lov'd she not Christ still more? nor did she strain
Love's oaths and protests to exalt the pain
Of separation. Silently she pray'd
For grace to Heav'n its own cause to sustain.
And while a sad smile round her pale mouth play'd
With tender grace, her lips upon his hand she laid.

CIV.

"This hand which bears two lives within its hold,
It can do nought but prosper now, I trow.
Yet if, dear life, thou wouldst be over-bold,
Within the heat of battle, think—ah, no;
Where honour calls, there, there I bid thee go.
Would it were mine, the dear felicity,
With my own heart to ward each hostile blow."
"My love, my life! Farewell, farewell," said he,
"Thy love will hold me safe, and give me victory."

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CV.

Two years pass'd by: and every hostelry
At Worms, primæval city of the Rhine,
Was fill'd from base to roof with festal glee;
The streets were hung with many a crimson line
Of gold-wrought tapestry, while mirth and wine
Within all hearts made one glad holiday:
The very sun, more goldenly to shine,
Seem'd on the town's-folk, as in bright array
To the cathedral towers they stream'd in constant way.

CVI.

The great new belfry shower'd forth peal on peal,
And shook each cloister'd convent's far repose,
The blue sky seem'd to palpitate and reel,
And throb with gladness. The cathedral close
Was cramm'd with faces; and on tiptoe rose
The far-off gazer, who a glimpse would see
Of bride or bridegroom o'er the serried rows,—
For Eric, who had swept his kingdom free
From heathen wolves, would wed the child of Burgundy.

CVII.

The chancel was ablaze with gold and gems,
With plume and mitre, crown and coronet,
With red and azure robes, whose ermin'd hems
Made folds of velvet, or light sarcenet,
Encinctur'd round the shoulders with rich fret
Of collars golden, and than all more bright
Shone Beauty's cheek: for on that day were met
Each noblest lady, baron, count, and knight
From all the empire, to make fair king Eric's marriage rite.

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CVIII.

And now from out the throng'd bright multitude
All eyes hung centr'd on the bridal pair,
Who at the altar in meek triumph stood.
And there was silence deep,—the very air
Was still with expectation,—but no prayer
Of priest was heard, nor choral voices sang.
As all began within their hearts to bear
A sense of wonder, from the pulpit sprang
A voice, which in all ears with fervid accents rang.—

CIX.

"Is this a time to wed and to be wed,
To bind the soul more close to earth's dull clod,
When Christ's blood has anew been freely shed
In that far land which his dear foosteps trod;
Where gore of martyrs clamours from the sod
For vengeance, and their children wail and groan
For help against the enemies of God;
Say, is Christ's honour less priz'd than your own;
O warriors, are ye slow to war for Christ alone?"

CX.

The speaker, who with wild impassion'd air
Thus thunder'd unforeseen, in robe was drest
Of coarsest serge—his crown was shaven bare,
Eyes gleam'd o'er sunken cheeks, upon his chest
A red cross shone sewn on his white cowl'd vest;
And still with pauseless vehemence his speech
Rous'd quenchless zeal within each list'ner's breast,
And his swift rolling periods each by each
Swept o'er all souls like waves upon some Northern beach.

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CXI.

And when he ended, all the crowd as one
Arose and smote the hands and cried aloud:
"*Ah! Diex lo veut!*" "God's blessèd will be done!"
And then their lives unto the Cross they vow'd,
While the recluse in threading through the crowd
Gave crosses right and left: upon his bride
King Eric look'd beseeching; she endow'd
With more than mortal passion smil'd in pride,
And to that holy man both lovers forward hied.

CXII.

And kneeling down by Eric's side she spake:—
"O Holy Sir, refuse not thou to me
The cross, ah! do not, for sweet Jesu's sake.
Spotless we swear our plighted troth shall be
Until Christ's ensign wave triumphantly
On Zion's hill. Ah! let me bear a part
In Eric's vow, and undivided we
Shall surely serve Christ better than apart
When absence shall have rent the strength of each lone [heart."

CXIII.

And more in swift impassion'd speech she said,
And touch'd with ruth that hermit's zealous breast,
Who to the bridal pair the cross of red
Reach'd forth with equal hands; and all the rest
To take the sacred ensign forwards press'd.
And then anew, he pray'd unto the throne
Of Grace, that their high calling might be blest,
That for their sins they truly might atone,
And back with purer hearts return unto their own.

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CXIV.

And then the hermit to their eager ears
Gave tidings of Nicæa's ramparts won,
And told of Godfrey, Tancred, and their peers,
Such deeds each fear'd that nought were left undone:
That day came rest. But with the morning sun
Went Eric homeward. There arriv'd, he chose
Four thousand of his chiefest; braver none;
A humbler crowd with axes, bills, and bows,
And wives and maids perforce would share his sacred vows.

CXV.

Through Almayn to the Danube Eric led
His legion. By his side, with aspect bright,
Rode Adelaïde, as they ever sped
By glen or forest, bourg or castled height;
Till down the Hæmus, winding with delight,
They saw at length the azure-gleaming tide
Of the smooth Bosphorus bath'd in glowing light;
And then these children of the North Sea cried
Aloud with joy, and rush'd unto the ocean side.

CXVI.

Soon, bright as some cloud city of the morn,
They saw Byzant's proud structures roof'd with gold
In queenly glory round the Golden Horn.
Soon in the city many a tale was told
Of the Crusading Host who onwards roll'd
In one victorious march. At each great deed
King Eric felt his spirit, eagle-soul'd,
Straining its wings to share the victor's meed,—
His thirst for fame became an unreposing need.

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CXVII.

And Adelaïde, in her noble heart,
Bore in his zeal an ever equal share,
And with her ladies ever for the start
Stood ready day by day; and when their fare
Was coarse or scant, and when the noon-day glare
Struck blinding from the plain or in the chill
Of gusty morn or eve, mid foul and fair,
Mid ways of peril, toil, and horror, still
Bore up with constant trust and uncomplaining will.

CXVIII.

Through Anatolia and the torrid wild
Of Phrygia, through the gorges dark and steep
Of the Cilician pass, by flanks up-pil'd
Of mountain crags, they reach'd at length the sweep
Of the fam'd Gulf of Issus, where the deep
Ran purple with the blood of Persia's best,
While o'er the slaughter'd myriads, heap on heap,
Young Alexander on to empire prest,
And Asia suppliant knew the Genius of the West.

CXIX.

Six hours' march onwards, not long past noon-day,
The scourers in wild haste came flying back
With news of Moslem squadrons in array;
For they had seen afar the standards black,
Barbaric ensigns gleaming in far track,
Horse cohorts trick'd in Asiatic pride.
That eve, they said, the Paynim might attack
The Danish armament. "Halt," Eric cried,
"Halt all, encamp; we will the conflict here abide."

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CXX.

He gave command, as swiftly as they might
T' entrench the line of battle; the left wing
He join'd unto the hills, while on the right
He leant upon the sea. Himself the king
Would hold the centre and defend the spring
At the slope's foot which rose up at his back;
And to the rear he order'd all to bring
The waggons, sumpter beasts, and baggage pack,
About a Roman tow'r, a ruin'd lonely wrack.

CXXI.

There, too, they plac'd the women; and that night
All lay in arms; then with the dawn's first glow
A cry came from the outposts; in swift flight
They rush'd in shouting, "Arm, it is the foe!"
Scarce could the Danes themselves in order throw,
When from the dusk a wild barbarian roar
Came hurtling; and in swift impetuous flow
The Toorkman horse upon the trenches bore,
Like clouds storm-driven round the breast of mountain [hoar.

CXXII.

With firmest front and long portending spear,
Unmov'd upon his vantage ground, the Dane
Receiv'd the onset. In their hot career
Brought up, the foremost riders turn the rein;
But from behind th' innumerable strain
Of horsemen all the front in ruin drove;
Into the tangled troops, with his small train
Of Danish knights, King Eric spurr'd and clove
A path of terror as the mass in one disorder strove.

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CXXIII.

Smit by the steel axe of the Danish king,
The Toorkman warriors fell at every stroke;
Nor steel-cap, hauberk, nor the woven ring
Of chain-mail the descending impulse broke
Of his keen edge; but as the knotted oak
Is riven by the lightning, flesh and bone
Were sunder'd, and no chariot's dizzy spoke
Plies swifter than his arm; the dead were strown
Beneath the hoofs, like pines by avalanche o'erthrown.

CXXIV.

And still they fled e'en when the Dane withdrew
From fierce pursuit; but when at length they staid,
Deep shame possess'd them, seeing then how few
The Christian foemen were. Once more array'd,
They shot afar with arrows and remade
Assault; but with like issue; all that day
They urg'd a thriftless battle: when the shade
Of eve fell down, they made again assay [away.
To storm the rampart, but retir'd in shame once more

CXXV.

Three days pass'd by, and still unmov'd, the Dane
Show'd firm unconquer'd front, though worn and sore,
And thinn'd with missile warfare; to sustain
The warriors at their posts, the women bore
Their food in baskets from the rearward store,
And from the spring, beneath the noonday heat,
They brought fair draughts of water evermore,
Speaking such words of exhortation sweet
As made each fainting pulse with new-born vigour beat.

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CXXVI.

But on the fourth day, with a strange surprise,
The Danes beheld the Paynims all at rest;
And early in the morn Cilician spies
Of Christian faith unto the Chieftain prest
With news that to the left, across the crest
Of mountain range, ten thousand Moslems went
Swift marching, and would soon invest
The Danish rear. Then Eric knew th' intent
Of Heav'n, that here his life should gloriously be spent.

CXXVII.

He rode along the ranks and cried, "Who will,
Let him depart; perchance upon our rear
In Christian towns ye may find refuge still."
Then to the Roman tow'r he gallop'd, where
The women and the sick with looks of fear
Talk'd of the tidings—them he told to take
All horses and depart, if they held dear
Their lives; but for himself he could not break
His vow—no odds at all to shun for Christ's dear sake.

CXXVIII.

And some were wrought on by their fears to fly:
(Yet 'twas a flight which led to death less fair
Than came to those resign'd for Christ to die;)
And Eric gave command, as soon as e'er
The foes appear'd behind, all should repair
About that ruin'd fort, round that to cling
Unto the death. Then turn'd he to prepare
That shatter'd wreck for conflict, and to bring
The baggage-wains around for bulwarks in a ring.

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CXXIX.

The Dane, when all he saw in order set,
Ascended up a broken stair of stone
Which wound within unto the parapet;
There Adelaïde sat in watch alone:
Across her knee a signal scarf was thrown,
By which, when first the foemen's march should lower,
To call the front. The sunny morning shone,
Reflected in the hues of each wild flower,
Which peace and time had twin'd about that ruin'd tower.

CXXX.

And Eric felt almost as though in trance,
Such dreamy stillness hover'd o'er the place;
And Adelaïde, hearing his advance,
Turn'd round to meet his look with tender trace
Of smile on lip and eye. The Dane king's pace
Quicken'd towards her, and her hand he took,
And sat beside her on a level space
Upon the wall, and then with silent look
They gaz'd, while Eric's lips with speechless quiv'ring [shook.

CXXXI.

Thrice he essay'd to speak, and thrice in vain;
Then falteringly his purpose to her ear
He utter'd: "Would indeed I could make plain
My thought, my Adelaïde, but a fear
Withholds me yet; ah, hear, I pray thee, hear.
When at the holy altar thou didst lay
Thy hand in mine with no forebodings drear,
I took thee as companion of my way,
Such great hopes in my heart held unimpeded sway.

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CXXXII.

"So high a cause I deem'd must always win,
Or if I thought of danger 'twas not this;
But now it seems to me most selfish sin
Thus to have drawn thee to life's dark abyss,
Through my default to cause the world to miss
Those virtues which might prove a saviour light,
To make the heathen turn and kneeling kiss
Christ's saintly feet; still time is for thy flight,—
Still mayst thou ride and gain the nearest town ere night.

CXXXIII.

"And for our love, be sure that time will give
A solemn grace unto its cruel end;
I for my manhood could not dare to live, [rend;
But thou——" "Ah, cease," she said, "my soul to
We women are not used our minds to bend
To reason in the clamour of the heart,
Nor to seek death nor fly it; but to blend
Her fortunes with her love is woman's part—
In this lies all her aim, her triumph, and her art.

CXXXIV.

"Oh, as the rind unto the sapling tree,
So thy dear love into my being grew,
Its nurture, shield and sole support to be;
Bereft of that my worth will perish too.
To self, to Heav'n, to all I were untrue,
To leave thee in dishonourable flight.
But ah! no more! no more! the moments few
We have, let us so use them in the sight
Of Heav'n that all its hosts may take in us delight."

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CXXXV.

She paus'd, and Eric look'd on her and saw
Her face with white angelic lustre beam,
And on both sides immeasurable awe
Descended; and as men when drowning seem
Beneath the waves to see as in a dream
Their whole past flash'd up in one swift expanse,
As landscapes start forth in the lightning's gleam,
So they, rapt deep in soft inwoven trance,
Their lives' whole beauty saw in one absorbing glance.

CXXXVI.

For in that moment's rapt communion all
The buried hours their ravish'd sweetness brought,
The honey'd hours of woodland, town and hall,
When from the bloom of intertwining thought,
The wingèd instants sweetest fragrance caught,
Like humming bees to hive them in the soul;
But in them yet a sense diviner wrought—
A faith sublime in that supreme control
Which wafts the thunder-cloud to its appointed goal.

CXXXVII.

Immers'd in fond infinitude, they kist
As brother and as sister; soft and light
Their pure embrace; not such as in the mist
Of fiery passion yields a fierce delight,
For weak is thrill of lip and arm the might
Of such beatitude to symbolise.
But westward now the hostile spears grew bright.
And each reads joy within the other's eyes,
The dawn of that great Day which broods o'er Paradise.

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CXXXVIII.

Then at due signal the front rank releas'd
Came to the tow'r, and in still earnestness
All made due preparation. A young priest
With low calm voice besought all to confess
Upon their knees, and passing through the press,
On all bestow'd the blessed Sacrament;
With thrilling words he pray'd that Christ would bless
Their martyr-end; and each in order went
Unto his post with heart exalted and content.

CXXXIX.

That Eve, when all the west ensanguin'd shone,
Upon the Danes who liv'd the battle roll'd
In ceaseless conflict, and they one by one
Fell, but in falling never loos'd the hold
Of sword or spear, their aspect fierce and bold
Glar'd from their features after life had fled;
And round about their mangled limbs the mould
Was trampled deep and plash'd to miry red,
And high before the wains were pil'd the Moslem dead.

CXL.

Death stay'd not once to thin the Danish ranks;
And Eric saw the end was close at hand.
Deep wounded was he, smitten in both flanks,
Yet still with look and word his little band
He rous'd; and now the Paynim craft had plann'd
To burn the bulwark, and one laden wain
Blaz'd up in fire thrown on with blazing brand.
Then Eric turn'd him from the reeking plain,
And went one last farewell from her he lov'd to gain.

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CXLI.

For Adelaïde and the priest had led
Within the walls the wounded as they fell.
While Eric enter'd she upheld the head
Of one sore wounded; when she saw full well
That he was dead, she rose. The ruin'd shell
Of that huge tow'r was lit in every nook
By light of burning wains; like fiends from hell
The Moslems shouted. Adelaïde took
Her lover's hand with an unutterable look.

CXLII.

He knew that look which claim'd his promise given,
That he would with his own hand strike the blow,
If need were, which should ope the gates of Heaven,
So that her sweet fair body nought might know
Of heathen profanation. Now the glow
And roar of Carnage fierce and fiercer grew.
In Eric's brain the madness to and fro
Flutter'd in lightning flashes as he drew
His dagger, and aloft the gleaming weapon threw.

CXLIII.

In act to strike with lifted arm his mien
Is as a priest of earth's most awful days
In sacrificial rite. Unto the sheen
Of his rais'd steel the deep unearthly gaze
Of Adelaïde clings, her whole form weighs,
All stark convuls'd, upon his arm, stone still,
Expectant of the death. Once he essays
In vain, and stoops, and o'er her forehead chill
Presses his burning lips, with a half broken will.

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CXLIV.

But she mov'd not at his caress, but hung
Stone still expectant, murm'ring clear and slow,
"Have courage!" Then his arm aloft he swung,
And sheath'd his steel blade in her breast of snow.
Her limbs relax'd, her head, declining low,
Fell on her shoulder like a flow'r o'erblown.
With lips all glist'ning with her life-blood's flow,
She sobb'd, "I felt no pain," in gentlest tone,
And for her lover's hand grop'd blindly with her own.

CXLV.

He clasp'd her palm, and felt a soft caress
From her soft fingers as her eyelids fell,
And the soul soar'd beyond the world's distress.
Then suddenly a fury 'gan to swell
In Eric's blood, such as North Sagas tell
Rag'd in the great Berserkers' veins of yore.
His lips foam'd white, and lightnings terrible
Flash'd from his eyeballs as he outward bore
The body on to where the red flames leap and roar.

CXLVI.

The form upon the blazing pyre he cast
Of one great waggon, then seiz'd from his side
His mighty battle axe; though bleeding fast
He grasp'd it as a feather; wrath supplied
His ebbing life, as he with giant stride
Rush'd on the Moslem, who fled diverse ways,
Like sheep who, grazing on some lone hillside,
Fly from the steps of man, then stand at gaze,—
So after flight they stood and eyed him with amaze.

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CXLVII.

Yet many laggards smote he to the dust;
Nine slew he ere the foemen press'd again
Around him wave on wave, at length one thrust
A lance into his temple; his own train
Had gain'd him then. Battling with might and main,
They seiz'd the corpse, and bore it to the pyre,
Where the bride's body was. To save the slain
From Paynim insult, threw it on the fire,
Fulfilling thus the need of Love's untold desire.

CXLVIII.

Of all the Danes but two made good their flight:
Beneath night's cover one to Antioch went,
Passing in peril through th' encampèd might
Of Saracens, and reach'd the Christians pent
Within the town; a bitter shame had rent
His soul that he had fail'd the end to share
Of his great chieftain,—here his whole intent
Was now to die for Christ; and to make fair
Life's close e'en then amid that famish'd town's despair.

CXLIX.

Thus from his lips the tale of Eric's death
Spread through the eager crowds: the hero's fame
Was blown from clime to clime on Rumour's breath,
As a most royal champion of Christ's name,
Ordain'd to bring the Infidel to shame.
This and the story of his martyr-bride
Seiz'd on men's minds, which to such frenzy came,
That horrid imprecations far and wide
Burst from blasphemous lips which God and Christ defied.

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CL.

For children were they in their simple creed,
These sons of Europe's dawn. Few understood
How Heav'n could leave them in despairing need,
And let its champions fall. In frantic mood
Men wrung their hands in anguish, knelt and strew'd
White dust upon their hair, and many swore
That they no more would kneel to Holy Rood,
Nor name the name of Christ, and some e'en tore
In fury from their robes the sacred cross they wore.

CLI.

But many of the noblest, bravest, best,
And chief the priests, essay'd rebuke, and prayer
And exhortation. But the livid pest,
The groans of dying men, the grim despair
Of hunger closed the ear, and none could bear
To hear of comfort; and the city grew
One charnel-house, and dogs and vultures tare
The dying in the streets, and then died too,
And rats in open day swarm'd o'er the corpses blue.

CLII.

And from the street the hot sun daily drank
A pestilential steam, at close of day
A poison dew upon the city sank,
And Death and Pain held undivided sway,
Hour after hour; and some would silent pray
For earthquake, or a burning fiery flood,
To put a term to horror and dismay.
And had the Moslem then assault renew'd,
But few of all the host the onset had withstood.

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CANTO IV.

WITHOUT THE WALLS.

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CANTO IV.

I.

O VIRGIN FAITH, who with the star's white ray,
    Leddest the sages of the East to where
Man's new-born Saviour in the manger lay;
    From the effulgence of whose presence are
    All virtues gifted with a strength more fair;
Who didst at Bethel unto Jacob show
    Thy angels on the silver-shining stair
Coming and going, as they ever flow
In ministry of grace from Heav'n to man below,—

II.

If now, O Faith, the mortal eye is dim
    To see the revelations of man's prime,
Be near the Muse when she essays to hymn
    The deeds thou wroughtest in heroic time,
    When Christendom leapt up in youth sublime,
And, like the sun, thy glory's golden light
    Burst through the clouds of misery and crime,
Which smote the age with horror and affright,
And on all germs of good rain'd down unceasing blight.

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III.

Come down, O Faith, that we may look on thee,
And see the crown of stars about thy brow,
And feel thy light like some illumin'd sea
Rout the soul's darkness with ecstatic flow;
Oh, let our hearts the fervid impulse know
Which led the mailèd hosts to Syria's shore,
And drew them victors out of ghastlier woe
Than e'er beset the demigods of yore
Whose deeds emblazon'd shine on page of classic lore.

IV.

For never, Faith, was thy seraphic look
Resplendent more than when at God's command
Thou and thy choir the starry seats forsook,
And with white wing in flight unceasing fann'd
The Empyrèan, and then lit to land
On Lebanon's snowy peak; thence down among
The streets of Antioch led thy seraph-band,
Where Europe's hosts with plague and famine wrung,
Or crouch'd in dumb despair, or rav'd with impious tongue.

V.

The noble few, who still serene of mood
Kept steadfast faith, now felt the present grace
Of thy celestial aid; with strength renew'd
They rose, and passing on from place to place,
From house to house, cried: "For a little space
God hides His glory; and ye curse and groan,
And veil with coward hands the buried face.
What merit have ye, if ye then alone
Are faithful unto Christ when He exalts His own?

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VI.

"God proves His sons with terror, death, and woe;
And thus of old the Holy Cross was worn
By Martyrs and Apostles. On Christ's brow
The blood-streaks ran beneath the crown of thorn,
And by the spear His blessed side was torn,
To show that Heav'n's true diadems are won
Mid pain and anguish, mockery and scorn:
Not our will, Lord, but Thine, we pray, be done;
Though we be slain, we trust in Thee and Thy dear Son."

VII.

So spake they, while Faith with her seraphs bright—
Repentance, Constancy, and Fortitude—
Pass'd through the crowds, and with their wands of light
Touch'd heart and brain. And then a change of mood
Came o'er the minds of men, new strength endued
Their wither'd hopes, and all the grand design
Of their emprise once more majestic stood
Before their eyes: once more the blessed sign
Of Christ's most Holy Cross they kiss'd with joy divine.

VIII.

And through the city rose sublime and strong
The chanted psalm, the heralds' warning cry,
As priests and pilgrims swept the streets along
Behind the host, with crucifix borne high
Above the long procession. Sob and sigh
Were frequent as they sought each fane of pray'r,
And knelt and sang in solemn litany,
That Heav'n once more would hold them in its care,
And pardon all the sin of their insane despair.

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IX.

And with the sound of trumpet heralds went
Proclaiming three days' penitence and pray'r;
And for three days did rich and poor repent
In pilgrim garb, with head and foot laid bare.
Loud cries and supplications through the air
Uprose above the censer's incense-fume,
And day and night were tapers burning fair
Upon the altars: none hop'd better doom
Than to give blood and life for Christ's most blessed tomb.

X.

Rapt with a holier joy men's minds became,
And o'er their heated fancies visions flew
And omens of God's mercy; clouds of flame
Hung o'er the Moslem host in blood-stain'd hue,
And legionary armies on the blue
Of heav'n were seen, who swept with standards white
Towards where from the deep sky burst to view
A fair celestial city, bastions bright,
Courts, palaces, and tow'rs, flush'd with auroral light.

XI.

Behold the Holy City! Lo! Behold!
And many saw, or thought they saw, and wept;
And as a priest, a pious man and old,
A midnight vigil at the altar kept
Within our Lady's shrine, there sudden leapt
A glory through the roof, and from the light
Christ on the altar with St. Peter stept,
And sorrowfully look'd with visage bright
Upon the priest, who shook with trembling and affright.

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XII.

"Have mercy, Jesus;" but the Lord replied,
"This host is all unworthy to pursue
My purpose! Did I not on every side
Beat back the heathen? Did I not renew
My bounty day by day, and bring ye through
The countless dangers of each land and clime?
But grosser in your sins ye ever grew;
And when ye took this city, in each crime
Ye wallow'd like the men unclean of olden time.

XIII.

"And therefore to this evil are ye brought,
Unworthy as ye are to bear my name."
Then Peter knelt to Christ, and Him besought
To have compassion; and the Virgin came
E'en as he spoke, and stars of silver flame
Moved round her as she stept adown in vest
Of lily whiteness, and she knelt to claim
Christ's mercy for His people, while tears prest
From out her eyes and dropp'd like light upon her breast.

XIV.

Moved by their supplications, Christ, at last
Relenting, spoke unto the priest: "Go, thou,
And say the hour of bitterness is past;
Let all confess their sins, and truly show
That they repent them of their outrag'd vow,
And in five days my mercy shall appear."
And then the vision ended. In the glow
Of morn the priest arose, and to each ear
Throughout the town proclaim'd with joy the tidings dear.

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XV.

A vision yet more wondrous was reveal'd
To Peter of Marseilles: to him in trance
Saint Andrew came, and told where lay conceal'd
The iron head of the Centurion's lance
Which pierc'd the side of Christ. By fraud or chance,
Or by Divine disposal, there was found
A lance-head as foretold; while 'neath the glance
Of midnight torches, in a pit profound
Beneath St. Peter's shrine, men delv'd the sacred ground.

XVI.

A mighty crowd into the church had prest;
From morn to night unwearied was the spade;
At dead of night the delvers took their rest.
Upon the fosse-brink Peter knelt and pray'd,
And leapt into the pit; then swift display'd
The lance-head, and a shout of rapture burst
And pass'd along the ranks who were array'd
Without in expectation, and dispers'd
Its news where'er hearts burn'd with wild desires athirst.

XVII.

None slept within the city walls that night;
All rush'd into the street, and hymns were sung
And canticles of joy: with lurid light
Unnumber'd torches burn'd; and pilgrims flung
Their arms about each other, kiss'd, and clung
In wild embrace. The Holy Lance they bore
In long procession, while the wide town rung
With cries triumphal, and men sobb'd and swore
In every word and thought to serve Christ evermore.

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XVIII.

"O Holy Lance! O pledge of grace divine,
Of Christ's dear Love, of Joy and Victory;
Of heathen overthrow prophetic sign,
And of the Holy Sepulchre made free!"
So cried they, while a tameless ecstasy
Possess'd all hearts, until its wondrous spell
Was as the surge of a tempestuous sea,
Tossing all hearts upon its furious swell,
To spread Destruction's wrath upon the Infidel.

XIX.

While such wild passion seeth'd in every breast,
The chiefs sat after noon in new debate,
And to the wisest that design seem'd best
What had but late been blam'd as desperate,
And call'd a madman's hope. For now to wait
Seem'd madness, lest the all-prevailing glow
Of pious exaltation should abate;
In open field the Red Cross they would show,
And sweep in swift surprise upon the scornful foe.

XX.

Then gave the chieftains with one heart and voice
Unto Duke Godfrey undivided power,
To be the one sole head, to make sole choice
Of order of the battle, and the hour
Of combat, whom around, as round a tower,
The host should rally in extreme distress,
With power to punish, and to give the dower
Of just reward—both in the present stress,
And till achievement should their utmost yearnings bless.

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XXI.

So far with loud acclaim and concord all
Rejoicing join'd; but then came change of mood,
With scoffs and scorns and tauntings steep'd in gall,
For Peter the grey Eremite pursued
A simple scheme, which unto few seem'd good;
Which was, to send unto the Paynim horde
A solemn offer to decide the feud
Of Turk and Christian by one champion's sword:
Vain hope! at which the foe, when told, with laughter [roar'd.

XXII.

Though the chief men of war held this a dream,
The poor delusion of an Eremite;
Yet since he urg'd and brought unto the scheme
Most holy argument, decreed that night
To send some who the Moslem might invite
To proof of single combat; then one cried,
"Who now shall be our champion?" In delight
Some cried, "De Bouillon." One said, "Who beside
Were worthy forth before such knights as we to ride?"

XXIII.

So spake one, and his words like coals of fire
Were unto Robert Duke of Normandy,
So that his pride blaz'd up in sudden ire.
He cried: "What base churl makes so free
With all the bravest men of Christendie?
Certes, Duke Godfrey is a noble knight;
Certes, I own, a leader good is he,
Most wise and valiant, but 'tis some churl's spite
To place him thus before us all for open fight.

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XXIV.

"No man alive shall by such envious praise
Thus throw a slur on me, who never yet
Lost stirrup in a fight, whose pennon's blaze
Has shone before ye all when worst beset
At Gorgoni." The clamour did not let
The warrior end; and many rose to speak.
The Count of Blois would stay the fume and fret
Of Robert; but in vain, whose angry cheek
Burnt red, while all around his eyes defiance seek.

XXV.

"Dar'st thou," said one, "with Godfrey of Lorraine
Compare thyself for prowess or for race?
Hast thou the royal blood of Charlemagne?"
Then Robert, raging—"Can I not too trace
From Doon de Mayence, who to none gave place,
And equal fought from early dawn to noon [face—
With Charles himself?" Then Bohemond with mock
"The tanner of Falaise came he from Doon,
Or from some knight who dropt in armour from the moon?"

XXVI.

And in an undertone he said to those
Around him—"Ah! this bastard's son must deem
Our mem'ries short!" Then passion's awful throes
Convuls'd Duke Robert's frame; a fiery gleam
Shot from his eyelids; with a stifled scream
He clutch'd his sword hilt, and his ample breast
Heav'd as he rose, and as through fiery steam
He saw all faces, madd'ning at the jest
Of that first speech, the last but in suspicion guess'd.

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XXVII.

To Bohemond he strode, but all around
The princes rose to stay him, and the first
Was Bertrand d'Aureval, who quickly wound
The wild Duke in his arms. But Robert burst
With a half-blow away, and madly curst,
With words of insult at the Count, who went
Aside much hurt in soul, and none had durst
Approach the Duke, had not the Legate lent
His aid to draw him off in wrathful discontent.

XXVIII.

Glaring around, he shook the priest's hand off;
Then burst off from him, striding to the street.
As in his brain the words of that rude scoff
Burn'd fresh, from time to time with speed more fleet,
His strides redouble to the far retreat
Where he and all his train found hostel-room;
An edifice for noblest uses meet.
He burst into the hall, where through the gloom
Of dusky eve some lamps the marble walls illume.

XXIX.

And there were sitting at their sorry meal,
His knights and barons. To his seat he went
And flung him down—his mail and blade of steel
Clang'd as he sat—in deepest converse blent
His liegemen's talk swept o'er each strange event
Of these late days and of high hopes renew'd;
They minded not their lord, nor knew what meant
His sullen silence, till his angry mood
Burst into speech, and all his fiery anguish show'd.

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XXX.

"Barons and chevaliers," he ending cried,
"I will have vengeance, ere I homeward fare:
For O be sure, no longer will I bide
The scoff and scorn of men, while others wear
The crown of valour, and we vainly bear
The brunt of battle, that each grasping knave
Like Bohemond, the spoils of war may share,
And scathelessly insult the frank and brave,
For their own vilest ends each good name to deprave.

XXXI.

"Yes, vengeance will I ere I wend me home."
"Leave vengeance unto God," a voice cried clear.
All look'd,—a friar hitherwards had come
Quite unperceiv'd, and now was standing near
Duke Robert's seat; his flashing eyes appear
Deep in his dark serge-cowl, and words of peace
He spoke to Robert, who refus'd to hear,
And call'd him "meddling dotard," bade him cease.
"Go," said he, "priestly words a warrior's ire increase."

XXXII.

Then threw the friar back his cowlèd vest,
And stept into the light, and Robert knew,
And started, with an utt'rance half-suppress'd
Of swift surprise, and round a murmur flew,
"'Tis the Duke Godfrey!" Then obeisance due
Duke Robert made, and said—"O pardon, Sire,
The rude words which in error from me flew."
"Fair son," said Godfrey, "thou canst hold no ire
'Gainst me, whom men exalt without mine own desire.

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XXXIII.

"I wis thy lance a surer is than mine,—
A better choice men doubtless, Duke, of thee
Had made. But yet no man's heart could decline
The proferr'd suffrage. Therefore let there be
Between us still our ancient amity.
O brave among the bravest, thou rid'st well
In open field, but in our own hearts we
Oft harbour worse foes than the Infidel,
When passions foul against our better selves rebel.

XXXIV.

"Give me thy hand, dear son; but hold it forth
As pledge that thou wilt tear the gnawing snake
Revenge from out thy breast. The knight's true worth
Thus more is shown, than when for Jesus' sake
Before his lance the Paynim squadrons break;
Leave thou Prince Bohemond to the fiery thrall
Of his own conscience, round which like a stake
The bad mind writhes at last. But thou didst gall
Sorely Count Bertrand, who is lov'd and prais'd of all."

XXXV.

More had he utter'd, when Duke Robert said,
With heart-throbs in his throat and filling eyes,
"O best and bravest, O most worthy head
Of Europe's princes, simply, nobly wise!
Wild am I, vain and rash, and yet I prize
Thy praise above all men's: my heart is wrung,
Seeing thee here in this most noble guise,
That I a jealous balance should have hung
And weigh'd my sword with thine upon a vaunting tongue.

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XXXVI.

"And for Count Bertrand I would duly make
All just amends my misdeeds to repair;
And as for Bohemond, I will but take
Such vengeance as becomes the Cross we wear—
No more, be sure." So saying, to a chair
He led Duke Godfrey, and then side by side
Sate the two princes in communion fair
Of noble thought, since Godfrey had espied
A gentle plan to soothe Count Bertrand's injur'd pride.

XXXVII.

For in the dearth of these last days of woe
The Count's destrier, which had his thews of might
Nurs'd in Provençal pastures, died, and so
Much grief possess'd his lord, for no true knight
Could feel a knight, when once his heart's delight,
His comrade steed, was gone. And each live thing
Was now of costliest worth, so that too slight
Was Bertrand's store of gold, due aid to bring
'Mid the devouring needs which aye from famine spring.

XXXVIII.

Yet as it chanc'd there was an agèd sire
Of Provence, who possess'd a charger good,
A steed of Spain, in whose red veins the fire
Of Arab race puls'd through Iberian blood;
Of spotless white, with strength and grace endued;
The lordly brute but late the rein obey'd
Of that old knight's dead son, and now his food
The old man shar'd with him and aye display'd
Such kindness to the beast as his dead son had paid.

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XXXIX.

And Godfrey's purpose was that sire to pray,
For love of Christ and of the Cross, to let
Count Bertrand have the steed. And now the way
With Robert he devis'd the gold to get
To pay the charger's price. They twain should set
Eight score gold bezants down, and for the rest
They should go round among the host, while yet
The morrow morn were fresh, and seek by quest
On every side from those who wore the red-cross vest.

XL.

And Robert clasp'd Duke Godfrey's good design
Unto his heart; and with the morrow's birth
Both princes early rose, and round each shrine
They went among the pilgrims, holding forth
Two bowls of brass, much speaking of the worth
Of Bertrand and his lance, and asking all
To help him to a horse. Then from his dearth
The poorest drew, and off'rings great and small
Came swift on every side, which ready hands let fall.

XLI.

That self-same morn the noble steed was led
To Bertrand by Duke Robert's groom, and near
His own lord follow'd, and all strangeness fled
Forth from them, and they were right glad of cheer.
Thus to all men Duke Robert grew more dear:
All prais'd him for his generous soul and good,
As most unlike a Norman. That destrier
Serv'd Bertrand well in service long and rude,
Bavieca was it nam'd because of Spanish blood.

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XLII.

The days of penance now were duly past,
And one more day was taken to prepare
For combat; and around each furnace blast
The armourer's hammer stirr'd the glowing air,
And helm and hauberk from their busy care
Came gleaming: for in these last days they grew
Clogg'd with red rust, neglected in despair;
And each torn link and rivet was made new, [drew.
And sword and axe and lance they o'er the whetstone

XLIII.

And to the shield the arm-brace was made good,
And the devices blazon'd fresh and clear
With gold and azure; archers, too, renew'd
Their sinewy bow-strings; spearmen gave the spear
New spear-heads; to the hoofs of each destrier
The smiths look'd curiously, and squire and groom
Survey'd the girths and trappings. In bright cheer
All labour'd, though the heavy hand of doom
Lay on them still and drew crowds daily to the tomb.

XLIV.

All corn and wine, and all that could restore
Their famish'd frames, were for the common need
Brought to the public places; and much more
Was found than hoped for, so that it seem'd deed
Miraculous of Heaven, an instant meed
Of mercy to the penitential heart;
And princes made their tables poor to feed
Freedmen and soldiers, and nor sale or mart
Was there, but each with each of all took freely part.

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XLV.

And all night long before the fateful day,
As peaceful stars slid slow across the sky,
Rose clang of preparation and the neigh
Of horse to horse, who scented combat nigh;
Heralds at arms went rushing swiftly by,
And tramp of men along each crowded street
Was heard with hum of voices and the cry
Of sentinels, and aye the solace sweet
Of Psalm and chant which rose towards God's mercy-seat.

XLVI.

For all night long were kneeling pilgrims shriven
Around the shrines, and prayers unceasing went
To Christ, the Virgin, and the Hosts of Heaven;
And towards dawn the Holy Sacrament
Was duly bless'd from bread yet left unspent.
Myriads of warriors kneeling took their part
Of Christ's pure sacrifice; all souls were blent
In one vast adoration: from each heart
Swell'd the resistless strength Faith can alone impart.

XLVII.

Strength like a stream of bright ethereal fire
Swept through each heart and made one brotherhood
Of nations merg'd in one divine desire.
Not one of all that gaunt grim multitude,
With lank lean looks, with famine ghastly-hued,
But held it in his heart a bliss supreme
To meet at such ill odds the Paynim brood:
The splendid heroes of romantic dream
Beside those wan pale forms by far less noble seem.

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XLVIII.

But all night long did Godfrey converse hold
With chiefs and captains in the Golden Hall,
To all together did he first unfold
His scheme of battle, pointing to the wall,
Where in design with rough but truthful scrawl
He had the field of combat ready plann'd:
There ev'ry coign of vantage, rise and fall
Of hill and dale, were mark'd, and with his hand [band.
He show'd both where and how each chief should lead his

XLIX.

Then, one by one, as any captain would,
He counsel gave: for to his eagle-sight
Each chief of all the Moslem multitude
Stood clear reveal'd,—his character in fight,
The temper of his troops in skirmish light
Or in set combat. Thus, to doubt relief
He gave, and knowledge of the foe, a might
In battle; each went, after audience brief,
With fuller heart and soul, and prouder of his chief.

L.

Thus gave he unto all men counsel bright;
His answer was to all prompt, brief, and clear;
And Eustace pass'd with him the busy night:
To whom he said, towards morning, "Brother dear,
What would our Baldwin give now to be here?
He cannot choose, I trow, but hear and weep."
Then he confess'd his sins to God's own ear,
Then laid himself adown, brief while to sleep,
And sank like infant child in slumber calm and deep.

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LI.

And when the day arose with mantling flush
Like angry passion on a warrior's cheek,
The Frankish ranks stood ready forth to rush:
And Godfrey rose and went around to speak
Last words of counsel, ere the shrilly shriek
Of treble pipe or trumpet's brazen peal
Startled the dawn, and every heart most weak
Felt mail'd in pow'r more strong than triple steel,
Such power divine as none but Heav'n's true warriors feel.

LII.

Hard by the river-gate De Monteil rein'd
His milk-white steed. His pontiff's robe of red
Upon his mailèd shoulders sat sustain'd,
The golden mitre glimmer'd on his head
Smit by the growing light, round him were spread
The Holy Ensigns of the Faith, upheld
By bishop, priest, and abbot; of Saints dead
The treasur'd relics, which in days of eld
The simple eye of Faith with loving awe beheld.

LIII.

St. Peter's keys there waved emblazon'd bright
Upon the banner of the Church, there too
The Holy Lance stood on the Legate's right.
Then at De Monteil's word asunder flew
The gates; as he exhorted all anew
Each warrior bow'd his head and bent the knee,
And cried, "Amen," and then that priestly crew
Enton'd in one deep burst of psalmody,
"Let God arise, and may his foes all scatter'd be."

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LIV.

Then mov'd the host: first from the foremost train
Spurr'd Hugh of Vermandois, his henchman bare
The Oriflamme of France, he drew his rein
Before the Legate, paus'd a moment there,
And stretch'd his arm expectant in the air.
The bearer of St. Peter's standard stept
And gave the Holy Ensign to his care,
Spurr'd with both heels the Count's roan charger leapt,
Pass'd gate and bridge, and on the Turkish squadrons [swept.

LV.

Fronting the bridge beside the river stood
Ten thousand horse, the vanguard of the foe,
Behind their leader like an unchain'd flood,
The knights of France with levell'd lances go.
As clarions peal and crashing trumpets blow,
A sudden terror leapt into the heart
Of every Paynim, swiftly to and fro
His courage waver'd, then all fly apart,
The horseman from his hands lets fall the half-drawn dart.

LVI.

Thus freely could the Frankish legions sweep
Across the plain unto the mountain's feet,
And form a rearward line which they should keep
As base of battle to protect retreat
Unto the town, while borne in onset fleet
The rest across the foe's front should defile
And wage the combat. From each house and street
The weak and old crowd on the walls the while, [smile.
And look and pray that Heav'n would on its own cause

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LVII.

O Thou who with one angry look canst shake
The rock-built strongholds of imperial might,
Making the firm foundations reel and quake
Of mightiest empires. To whose searching sight
Man's darkest thoughts stand forth array'd in light;
Through whose unsleeping care this rolling sphere
And all creation moves both day and night,
Didst thou not hear them? Didst thou not draw near
And bless that day the edge of Frankish sword and spear?

LVIII.

Was it Faith's fond illusion?—some weird spell
Of fancy and a glamour of the eye,
Which made that day the Christian bosom swell
With might invincible; which saw the sky
Throng'd with bright forms, and flashing pennons fly
Of warrior saints who rode on horses white,
There where the storm of battle roar'd most high;
Angelic militants from realms of light,
Sent down to aid the Cross in that unequal fight?

LIX.

Fair visions of old story! ye were true
To those who saw you; lords of many a fray,
Where'er the Moslem crescent vanquish'd flew
Before the Cross ye led the victor way,
Armies of saints in chivalrous array.
For then men felt all Heav'n around them move;
But Heav'n recedes as this old world grows grey,—
The child alone within the blue above
Beholds in seraph-eyes apocalypse of love.

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LX.

Yet not alone that day was Heav'n seen there
In gleam of angel combatants—but rain,
Delightful rain fell through the burning air,
Restrung men's nerves, and slak'd the dusty plain,
Stilly it fell; solemn the sacred strain
Of priestly choir was heard above the tread
Of warriors, captains' cries and ringing rein
And hoofs of horses—else with silence dread,
In twelve battalion'd lines, the chiefs the onset led.

LXI.

Meanwhile the Moslem multitudes were still,
Secure in scorn and arrogance they lay,
Or mov'd back to the camps along each hill
Around the plain, aye eying as their prey
The coming Christian. Little thought had they
How ruin waits on arrogance—yet worse,
Obedience was not, all scorn'd to obey.
Ameer and Atabek with brows adverse
Look'd each on each, and at their leader carp and curse.

LXII.

And as is wont where all have like pretence
Of dignity with him who holds command,
More than is due is claim'd in insolence
And less is giv'n.—Thus all the Soldan plann'd
Later was evil wrought—each Moslem band
Shared of each rival chief the jealous spite,
And one light word might lift the armèd hand
Of Moslem against Moslem, nor could sight
Of foes whom all did scorn their warring arms unite.

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LXIII.

The Soldan of Mossùl still in his tent
Lay slumb'ring, for his slaves dared not for fear
Arouse their Lord. When to his couch side went
The Ameer Alaeddin—kinsman near
Unto the Caliph. In his chieftain's ear
He shouted, "Rouse thee, for by Allah's grace
The Giaours are on us, and will reach us here
Unless we stir us." Turning in his place
The Soldan rais'd his eyes in Alaeddin's face.

LXIV.

"What wouldst thou, man!" Then Alaeddin said,
"Know that this morn, from Antioch's citadel,
At earliest dawn, the black flag was dispread
By the beleaguer'd Faithful to foretell
Some new design among the Infidel:
Who swiftly burst forth by the river side
And on the vanguard in wild onset fell
And drove them from the bridge: in armèd pride [side."
Now sweep they o'er the plain from stream to mountain

LXV.

Then spoke the Soldan in his cruel mirth,
"The hounds uncircumcis'd—they fear to fall
By hunger, and they seek to fill their dearth
Of food with Moslem steel. Well, let them all—
All their lean ragged wasted thousands crawl
Forth from the town, let none behind remain
And shield their weak arms with the city wall.
So shall we crush them sooner, and no stain
Of unbeliever's foot e'er soil our coasts again."

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LXVI.

So spake he in blind insolence and hate,
But other chieftains came and him besought
From his proud boasting somewhat to abate,
And for th' impending battle to take thought;
But their persuasions fail'd, and almost wrought
The man to anger—only would he deign
To let the nearest chieftains make onslaught.
Then five Ameers descended to the plain;
Sokman the Ortokide rush'd first the van to gain.

LXVII.

But he the Soldan in his harden'd mood,
Scorning the starv'd Franks with a dull fool's scorn,
Arose and to the bath his way pursued,
All leisurely as was his wont each morn;
For countless camels, mules and slaves had borne
All the luxurious needs of Eastern ease
Upon the march to furnish and adorn
His proud pavilions, where the summer breeze
Wander'd through silken domes and gilded galleries.

LXVIII.

And when the bath was ended he endued
About his form gauze robes of Indian loom,
And bound his caftan, red and amber-hued
Of silk of Samarcand. His turban's plume
Was snow-white, and a ruby's dazzling bloom
Was on the clasp which bound it. Then he past
And sought the chief pavilion's silken room,
And there himself upon his knees he cast,
And to his Kibleh pray'd ere yet he broke his fast.

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LXIX.

Then his attendant slaves all rob'd in white
Brought lucent sherbet cool'd in mountain snow,
Pomegranates, peaches, figs, in gold dish dight
With cool fig-leaves. Then bade he slaves to go
For his Sultàna: with bright smile, and slow
And swaying Eastern gait she came: the pair
Play'd chess together, and she lov'd to show
And he to watch across the chequer'd square
Her white and taper hand begemm'd with jewels rare.

LXX.

But now already by the river bank
Christians and Moslems met in mingled fray;
Before the coming squadrons of the Frank
Unto the hill the Paynim host give way.
Bertrand and Tancred led the first array,
Provençals and Italians rank'd in one
Embattled cohort. The Orontes lay
Upon the right, the knightly pennons shone
Thick gleaming to the hills in the returning sun.

LXXI.

For the west wind uprising swiftly swept
The clouds from off the blue, and all the field
Wav'd with incessant lightnings which aye leapt
From helm and hauberk, lance and sword and shield;
Standard and gonfanon and pennon reel'd
And sway'd advancing, and through many a rent
In their heraldic blazonry reveal'd
A tale of victory. That day there went
Princes and knights on foot with simple spearmen blent.

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LXXII.

And each destrier who had surviv'd the dearth
Now seem'd to share the high heroic heat
Of his proud rider, but none paw'd the earth
Nor bounded forwards with imperious feet
Like that which bore Count Bertrand in his seat.
Him all the hosts of Provence on that day
Follow'd, since prostrate with devouring heat
Of fever in his veins Count Raymond lay,
And his weak limbs refus'd their lord's will to obey.

LXXIII.

But now Sokmàn adown the hillside swept
With his Seljukian Turks, on either side
Miramolin and Schams Eddaulah kept
His flanks defended: surging far and wide
The Moslem turbans, spears and steel caps ride;
Unto the crash of cymbal, drum, and horn
The desert horses in wild onset stride,
Each Paynim bosom felt barbaric scorn
The combat to engage with foemen so forlorn.

LXXIV.

From either wing the Turkish archers shot
Thick volleys, but the west wind sway'd their flight,
So that they reach'd not. Bating not a jot
In their advance, the Franks spread left and right
In one thin line of battle, while each knight
Spurr'd to the front and couch'd his shining spear:
"O Holy Sepulchre! O angels bright!
O Christ! O God! O Virgin Mother dear!
In our weak arms, let now your injur'd might appear."

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LXXV.

Such were their prayers as still one spear-cast lay
Between the armies. Bertrand singled out
Miramolin who spurr'd his Arab bay
Foremost among the Moslem; with a shout
They rush'd together. On the buckler stout
Of round rhinoceros-hide with orbs emboss'd
The Frank lance struck deep piercing, and throughout
It pass'd and pierc'd the Paynim heart, and toss'd
Him from his steed, which swift a Frank knight caught and [cross'd.

LXXVI.

With spears implanted in the ground the Franks
Thrust back the Moslem, while the knights before,
Or singly, or in squadrons, pierce the ranks
Of the astounded Paynim. Like the roar
Of the vex'd Euxine on its rock-bound shore
Then raged the din of battle. Bertrand's plume
Was deep among the turbans, ever more
The knights of Provence see it flash and loom
A beacon to the eyes athwart the reek and gloom.

LXXVII.

Then Tancred, charging from the farthest left,
Bore right athwart the Infidel to gain
Count Bertrand, and his bright glaive from the heft
Dropt gore at every stroke, so that the slain
Lay on his path behind and bathed the plain;
Rinaldo and the knights of Lombardy,
Of Pisa and Amalfi swell his train.
"*God and Saint Mark!*" the sons of Venice cry;
The knights of Genoa shout, "*Saint George!*" in rivalry.

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LXXVIII.

There are who love upon the harbour shore
To see the ocean's white wrath leap the bar
And hear the baffled monster's painful roar;
There are who love to look upon the war
Of elements in conflict, and the jar
Of thunders bursting on the mountain's side,—
Yet is the battle storm sublimer far
When nations meet, and in their armèd pride
The sovereignty of Right by slaughter's steel is tried.

LXXIX.

The blazon'd standards far and wide array'd,
The crash of spears as brazen trumpets blow,
The arm uplifted, and the flashing blade,
The fainting knees, the emptied saddle-bow,
The horse-hoofs trampling on the cloven brow,
The earth all steep'd with blood as lees with wine,
The groans unheard of mightiest chiefs laid low,
Of Heavenly will are hierophantic sign,
The characters are dark yet not the less divine.

LXXX.

As when a leopard seeking nightly prey
Leaps twice or thrice against some farm-wall high,
And leaps in vain, then sudden flies away
Scar'd by the dog's bark or the herdsman's cry,
So the foil'd Paynims round on all sides fly,
As Tancred's good sword clove a lane of dead
Athwart their ranks, nor does one archer try
To shoot in flight, or turn the turban'd head, [fled.
But all as though pursued by Heav'n's own vengeance

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LXXXI.

Still o'er the chess-board Kerbogah was bent
With his Sultana, when the news was brought
Of this repulse; back in surprise he leant
And eyed the bearer in perplexèd thought,
Then thrust aside the rich board gem-inwrought,
In mix'd disorder fell War's ivory train,
As on impatient feet he rose and sought
The entrance door and look'd upon the plain,
And saw the Turkish horse fly fast with loosen'd rein.

LXXXII.

Beholding then the well ordain'd array
Of the Frank host, mute was he, and a cloud
Of transient doubt athwart his proud soul lay,
And round him many a Moslem chief was loud,
And counsell'd this and that, and pointing show'd
Each gap of weakness in the Frank advance,
And named by name each Christian chief who rode
Beyond the ranks; but Kerbogah's swift glance
Survey'd in silent thought the champaign's wide expanse.

LXXXIII.

Then order'd he that from the stream's left bank
Rodvàn and Dokak should their hosts unite,
And cross the ford upon the Giaours' right flank,
That Kilidj Arslàn too with his vast might
Of Asian horse should cross behind their right,
And overwhelm in haste the Frankish rear
Where was Prince Bohemond. For instant fight
All Moslems in the front should couch the spear
And break the long Frank front ere yet it drew more near.

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LXXXIV.

Diverse and swift the Arab horsemen went
Bearing the mandates, which were evil wrought
And marr'd by envy, hate and discontent;
And on that day two brothers made onslaught
Upon each other, whose hearts passion-fraught
Had long been hostile, after Eastern wise
Where the sweet bond of household love is nought.
Rodvàn and Dokak with malignant eyes [surprise.
Look'd each on each, and plann'd and fear'd some fell

LXXXV.

Thus when the Soldan bade them cross the stream,
Each shunn'd the foremost step with jealous fear,
Lest fit his brother should that moment deem
When half his host had cross'd to couch the spear
And spring with traitor stealth upon his rear:
Thus were their hosts in grim suspicion bound
Vexing each other with taunt, jest and jeer;
Each holding in defiance to his ground,
While horn and atabal sent forth a madd'ning sound.

LXXXVI.

The turmoil grew, men scarce knew how it grew
To open battle. In wild tumult toss'd,
The hosts of Haleb and Damascus slew
Their comrades of the faith. In fury lost
They fought until the blazing sun had cross'd
Its due meridian, when both ranks were thrown
Into a panic; for through either host
Of Christian onset a wild fear had flown,
And all fled unpursued except by God alone.

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LXXXVII.

Thus all the Paynim myriads on one flank
Turn'd of themselves to flight; but all day long
Elsewhere the battle rag'd between the Frank
And Moslem. In innumerable throng
Squadron on squadron stormful burst along
The Christian front and ever back were hurl'd;
War roar'd from all his throats, and drum and gong
And trumpet crash'd while nations blindly whirl'd
Like good and evil pow'rs contending for the world.

LXXXVIII.

As round about the sea-weed matted base
Of some tall cliff the foil'd seas back retire
And there is awful silence for a space
While they anew collect their swelling ire,
And rear their heads terrific ever higher
Waving their crests in anger till they burst,
Thus did the Moslem onset never tire
Around the Frank, and all his wrath accurst
Blaz'd fiercer like the pangs of unappeased thirst.

LXXXIX.

But as some ship in mid Atlantic braves
The fury of the tempest, while each flood
Flings all its monstrous arms in thund'rous waves
Like flames above her, so the Frank host stood
Amid the roaring deluge aye renew'd
Of Asian myriads, who as though possess'd
By the worst fiends of gaunt Destruction's brood,
Like madden'd herds upon the Frank spears press'd,
Where died their hell-born zeal by death alone suppress'd.

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XC.

Vain were their legions loos'd like mountain snows,
Vain Medes and Persians, vain the serried might
Of Bactrian slingers, and the hornèd bows
Of Indian archers, vain the lances bright
Of Afghan hillmen, vainly swift as light
The Turk and Tartar wav'd the fine-wrought blade
Of Bagdad and Damascus, vain the sight
Of Kurd and Toorkman squadrons close array'd—
Before their rushing front the Frank stood undismay'd.

XCI.

Grand loom'd the Moslem chieftains as they dash'd
Amid the steam of battle, dazzling gleam'd
Their gilded scimitars, bright jewell'd flash'd
Their turban plumes; their silk robes waving stream'd
With golden fringe behind them, as they scream'd
Their Moslem war-cry, "*Allah! Allah! hu!*" [beam'd
And when the death-blow came their dark eyes
With gloomy lustre, from the sky's deep blue
The soft-arm'd Houris laugh'd upon the Moslem true.

XCII.

A Paradise of every sound and scent,
And sight voluptuous, and sweet waters quaff'd
From starry goblets, and joy's soft content,
Unbroken and unending in one draught
Of life immortal, such fair visions laugh'd
Upon the Moslem's dying fleeting thought
As his soul ebb'd forth on the Christian shaft.
For this he lived, and as he listed fought— [sought.
Through Death's dark portal thus the senses' joys were

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XCIII.

But while the Moslem fought with demon pride
And knew no concord; all the Franks were bound
In one pure love of Christ the Crucified:
And all the Christian virtues thus were found
That day within their bosoms to abound,—
Obedience, steadfastness, humility,
And fair fraternity; submission crown'd
Each chieftain's purpose, and in due degree
Each aided each with love and sweet alacrity.

XCIV.

On the rough edge of battle as it hung
From Antioch's wall were strain'd the anxious eyes
Of pilgrims old, priests, wives and maids, who sung
To Heav'n their Psalms and holy litanies,
Who watch'd the floating standards fall and rise,
Look'd to each well-known blazonry and plume,
And caught the roar of battle as the cries
And shouts of combat swim athwart the gloom,
And tell which way inclines the trembling scale of doom.

XCV.

For aye along the line of conflict grew
The carnage ghastlier; ramparts of the slain
Victors and vanquish'd ever rose anew
Before the Frank advance; and on the plain,
Where foot by foot had pass'd the battle strain,
A gauntlet could not fall, nor step could tread,
Except upon a corpse; with broken rein
And turn'd and emptied saddle, chargers fled,
Scrambling with iron feet through mounds of mingled dead.

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XCVI.

But steadfast with unconquerable mind
The Franks beheld their brothers by their side
Fall, while another swiftly from behind
His comrade's place with ready step supplied.
Immoveable against the Moslem tide
As mountain pines against the tempest blast
Each phalanx stood; in vain the Paynim tried
Each ruse of war: the volleys thick and fast
And sulphurous globes of fire from brazen engines cast.

XCVII.

Flaccid and numb full oft the arm became
With endless combat; dizzy dark the brain;
And tongue and throat, all scorch'd as though with flame;
But when anew came on the deadly strain,
New valour rush'd into each nerve and vein,
And fill'd each soul with battle's awful glee;
Each lightly grasp'd his sword and spear again,
Their war-cry roar'd forth like a raging sea:
"*Montjoie*," and "*Diex lo veut*," and "*Saint Sepulcre aïe.*"

XCVIII.

And as an eagle through the thunder-storm
Wheels in imperial course, with such delight
The Frank chiefs plung'd exulting through the swarm
Of Paynim chivalry, before the sight
Of their own legions.—Ah!—then left and right
Roll'd many a turban'd head, and mailèd sleeves
Fell with the arms hewn off by the sharp bite
Of Christian steel, which in each knight's hand cleaves
Men's limbs as light as corn is reap'd for autumn sheaves.

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XCIX.

Nor Roland, nor Olivier at Roncesvaux,
Nor other Paladin of Charlemagne,
Nor knight of Arthur, Tristan, or Lancelot,
Did deeds more worthy of heroic strain;
The knights of Artois, Picardy, and Maine,
Of wide Champagne, and vine-clad Burgundy,
That day the Oriflamme did well sustain;
Count Hugh of Vermandois ne'er ceas'd to be
The foremost lance of all their brilliant chivalry.

C.

And never Godfrey wrought with arm and brain
Such marvels: not e'en when in youthful pride
He bore the Kaiser's standard in the plain
Of Merseberg, and his sword vermeil-dyed
Shear'd the usurper's right arm from his side,
Had he such glowing aspect; for his cheek
Had a fresh gleam of youth, as far and wide
He dash'd where'er the Christian line seem'd weak,
And smote with matchless arm Ameer, and Khan, and [Sheik.

CI.

The sunlight round his crest's gold dragon glow'd,
His helmet-crown's gilt fleurons sparkl'd keen,
His starry baldric round his surcoat flow'd,
His close chain hauberk and his sleeves' mail'd sheen
Flash'd with an azure lustre, and between
His ventaille bars, his eyes like meteors gleam'd.
In splendour thus and more than mortal mien
He clasp'd his steed with knees of might which seem'd
To guide his charger's feet wherever fit they deem'd.

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CII.

His charger was in Aragon begot,
Whence then came all the noblest, and its name
Was Zegri, black as night without a spot;
In his strong grasp his falchion shone like flame,
Wrought by the great smith Wailand, whose blades'
Was noised abroad in every Christian land; [fame
Norwegian was its steel; from many a frame
That day it loos'd the life-blood on the sand,
Resistless as God's wrath it was in Godfrey's hand.

CIII.

In numbers numberless the common herd
Of Paynims fell before him; while he went
Leading his own Lorrainers. As the bird
Falls flutt'ring when the serpent's gaze is bent
Upon it, thus the sight of Godfrey sent
A palsy swift which paralys'd the arm
Of many a Paynim, so that it fell spent,
Reft of the power to cover or to harm;
Helpless the Paynim stood, possess'd as by a charm.

CIV.

Since without terror could no foeman long
Behold his sword-blade flashing swift as light;
For as the serpent flickers with his tongue
So swift that one grows treble to the sight,
So Godfrey's blade mov'd with such lightning flight,
That three swords all at once within the air
Before him shone forth visible and bright,
And men's hearts perish'd with a lorn despair,
Or were as turn'd to stone before the Gorgon's stare.

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CV.

So keen his blow that finest Indian mail
He cut like gauze, and on that day he smit
A Tartar chief in twain, so that the tale
Of that blow long resounded. His sword lit
Beside his neck, clove collar-bone, and bit
Through back and breast; nor ribs nor spine its force
Could hinder; to right hip the man was slit
From the left shoulder slant, and half his corse
Fell to the earth while still the legs bestrode the horse.

CVI.

O'er his steel sword-hilt from the sword-point dript
The gore unto his sleeve mail, clots of gore
Mingling with foam and dust all frothy slipt
Adown his steed's black chest; his flanks all o'er
Were fleck'd with crimson'd foam, and evermore
His fetlocks dripp'd, by the red wine new dyed
Of slaughter's vintage. Thus amid the roar
Of battle rode Duke Godfrey; by his side
Eustace de Bouillon strove with equal front to ride.

CVII.

And four Ameers of chiefest note were slain
With his good sword-edge. Ilderim was one,
The Caliph's younger son. His sire in vain
Besought his best belovèd child to shun
The brunt of battle, when the young man won
Unwilling leave unto the war to go.
Rejoicing in his youth, the Caliph's son
Spurr'd close by Godfrey, who with sideward blow
Struck off the stripling's head bent o'er the saddle-bow.

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CVIII.

Some pity felt he, but in fury sprung
On him Emessa's fiery soul'd emir
Djanah Eddaulah, and with rais'd arm flung
At Godfrey, but in vain, his long lithe spear;
Swiftly as round he swoop'd in wild career,
De Bouillon spurr'd his noble steed, who dash'd
Straight on the Moslem. Godfrey's sword fell sheer
Upon his jewell'd casque, the jewels flash'd
Asunder, and the skull unto the teeth was slash'd.

CIX.

And Soliman the Kurd before him fell,
And Schams Eddaulah, the unhappy son
Of Akhi Syan, who the citadel
Of Antioch still possess'd. And when day shone
Down from his mid-day throne, the Turks begun
To slacken in assault, and all the Franks
Advanc'd in line more swiftly, all in one,
So that nowhere the foe could pierce the ranks, [flanks.
And hill and stream they kept, still guarding both their

CX.

Meanwhile a weight of awful ruin hung
Upon the rear; a never-resting sea
Of Moslem fury rag'd and thund'ring rung
From griding floods of iron. You might see
Afar, Prince Bohemond's tall crest rise free
Above the steel waves clashing to and fro,
Swaying as sways some mountain cedar tree
Swung by the storm when crashing north winds blow,
And half the woods lie strewn upon the plains below.

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CXI.

For there in vengeance for his ravish'd realm
Storm'd Kilidj Arslan the Sultàn of Roum—
Storm'd with his Asian myriads to o'erwhelm
The Franks, who kept the crushing weight of doom
From bursting through the rear. The sweat and [spume
Of battle wax'd more deadly, and the roar
Of fury hoarser, and the murd'rous gloom
Of desperate brows more dark, as evermore
Fresh fields of Paynim steel upon the Frank lines bore.

CXII.

And Kilidj Arslan aye with voice and look
Urg'd on the battle. Of a Tartar race
Was his black courser, in his hand he shook
A monstrous weapon, a spik'd Indian mace.
And from the darkness of his swarthy face
A thunder cloud of fury lower'd and flash'd
As ever in renew'd and headlong pace
Close to the Frankish spears he wildly dash'd,
Where like a lion foil'd his furious jaws he gnash'd.

CXIII.

Kurds, Turks, and Tartars e'er anew he led
Against the Tafûr foot, who stood that day
Like columns sunk in earth all sodden red
With blood of their own comrades. In array
Their scythe-blades fix'd like spears kept back at bay
The wrathful Paynim: many a Moslem steed
Was spitted to the haft. Chief in the fray
The King Tafûr shone forth in valiant deed,
Wielding his giant scythe as lightly as a reed.

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CXIV.

And there the bravest knights of Sicily,
Of Puglia and Calabria, fought around
Prince Bohemond's banner, and but twenty-three
Had horses, all the rest upon the ground
Planted the long spurr'd heels and made rebound
The Moslem onset from their points of steel.
There all the morn roar'd one unceasing sound
Of battle, and the Frank knew that the weal
Of all the host was pois'd in their unswerving zeal.

CXV.

Yet grew the combat ghastlier, and the dead
And dying hamper'd round the raging feet
Of battle—as earth reel'd beneath the tread
Of rage most horrible. The steely sleet
Of the Kurd archers, with death's fleetness fleet,
Made every instant the Frank ranks more few.
Men's brains began to reel amid the heat
And agony of combat, and their hue
Turn'd livid, and their eyes burst out and bloodshot grew.

CXVI.

And Ahmed Ebn Merwàn, with chieftain eye,
Look'd from afar, and saw the mortal strain
Of Bohemond and his host: with piercing cry
He call'd his Arabs, swift resolv'd to gain
The ford where late those brothers on the plain
Had fought, and left undone the charge assign'd
Of Kerbogah. Here would he lead his train
Of Arab horse, and, charging from behind,
Break through the Frankish rear, as Kerbogah design'd.

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CXVII.

Thus ruin hung suspended o'er the Frank:
For when Rodvàn and Dokak wildly fled,
The guard which stood upon the stream's right bank
Had join'd the vanward battle since no dread
Of peril seem'd from thence. But Heav'n instead
Watch'd o'er their weakness, and the danger show'd
Unto the Norman duke, who, splash'd with red,
As with a burning town's fire splendour glow'd;
And from successful charge along the right wing rode.

CXVIII.

Duke Robert saw the Arab squadrons flow
Like one long cloud of storks from out the stream,
Their white haiks glancing in the sun like snow:
Amid the roar he heard the with'ring scream
Of Arab onset, as with meteor gleam
They flash'd swift riding. Robert look'd and saw
Prince Bohemond's plume amid the battle-steam,
And his thinn'd ranks in new-form'd order draw [maw.
To meet the storm new scap'd from dark Destruction's

CXIX.

Duke Robert laugh'd within his noble breast
That now his time was come revenge to wreak
On Bohemond for his insulting jest.
Then mid his Normans swiftly did he seek
For fourscore knights; and high words did he speak,
Which made their hearts like lions in them bound.
Then dash'd they rearwards straight to where the Sheik
Ahmed had now girt Bohemond around, [drown'd.
Whose strength between two hosts seem'd now all hopeless

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CXX.

The Normans rode in troop compact and strong,
With lances set in rest: and unaware
Their ridge of steel points rent the Arab throng.
As the storm tears the storm-sail so they tear
The Moslem mass asunder. Here and there
Run steeds all riderless, or dragging low
Their wounded riders, in their last despair
Hanging on bridle rein, with bleeding brow;
Unscath'd the Frank troop wheels and rides amid the foe.

CXXI.

And hardly then Duke Robert aim'd a stroke
Which was not death: alone ten spears' length on
He plung'd into the fight—when his lance broke
Out leapt his glittering glaive. And never one
Of the four sons of Aymon dazzling shone
With such war splendour. In his gauntlet's hold
His sword flam'd like to Michael's—like a sun
The leopard in his helm fire-flashes roll'd, [gold;
And in his three-square shield twin leopards burn'd in

CXXII.

And on his brow a might inflexible
As Death's own angel sat. In headlong speed
He sought for Ahmed, who on gilded selle
Girt on a panther's skin his Arab steed
Wheel'd here and there, and aye the lithe jereed
Darted with deadly aim. He was not slow
To meet the Duke. O, Arab prince, take heed!
The lion on thy plains by starlight thou
Mayst surely safer meet than Robert's fury now.

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CXXIII.

Awhile they cling in combat side by side,
    Eyes watching eyes with an unswerving stare;
And cunningly their right hands mov'd and plied
    The sword and scimitar: and here and there
    Oft feigning, swift they struck where least their care
Had seem'd to be, till Robert with one sweep
    Clove through the targe of Ahmed, lighting fair
Upon his turban'd helm, and, biting deep, [sleep.
Plung'd the young Sheik's warm life in death's unfathom'd

CXXIV.

As when among a herd of mountain deer
    The leader falls heart-stricken by the aim
Of some far hunter, then in wild career
    Swift terror drives the troop; such vague fear came
    Among the Arabs: swift as lightning-flame
It pass'd from heart to heart: all turn'd and fled.
    Then Robert, raising up his stalwart frame
Upon his stirrup, turn'd his plumèd head
And shouted to his knights to follow where he led.

CXXV.

Then wav'd he to the Franks, who open'd wide
    Their ranks, and crying "*à moi! Normandie!*"
He dash'd right through unto the farther side.
    He pass'd by Bohemond: in warrior glee
    He tore his banner from him, shook it free,
With its gold blazon'd cross above his crest,
    And spurr'd at Kilidj Arslan furiously.
His Norman nobles, forming six abreast,
Into the legion'd Turk behind their leader press'd.

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CXXVI.

And Kilidj Arslan saw the Normans burst
Within his line of battle: man and horse
And standards fell before them. Wrath accurst
Seiz'd on him, and in fell impetuous course
He bore on Robert, while in thunders hoarse
He shouted havoc. Baleful gleams of fire
Stream'd from each redden'd eyeball as from source
Of hot volcanic fury: shame and ire
Like scorpions stung his blind infuriate desire.

CXXVII.

But Robert—with his targe about his neck,
His reins and Bohemond's banner in his left—
Receiv'd the Paynim as the rock some wreck
Storm-driv'n upon it. Many a blow and deft
They interchang'd, till Robert sweeping cleft
The Paynim through the side and through the lung
With blow reverse. Of all his might bereft,
The Paynim swart upon the field was flung,
And from his heaving flank in floods the life-blood sprung.

CXXVIII.

Balanc'd in expectation on the pair
Both hosts had paus'd. And when they saw the fall
Of the Sultàn of Roum, the Frank knights bare
Together on the Moslem, shouting all
"*Aïe, O Saint Sepulcre!*" and with like call
The Tafùr foot advanc'd, and hand to hand
And foot by foot they fought: nor interval
Of combat was there till each Moslem band
Fled wildly to the sea along the river strand.

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CXXIX.

And Robert smote the Paynim as he fled
E'en to the sea: and on the salt sand shore
Lay the heap'd pyramids of turban'd dead,
Staining with red the ocean's fringes hoar;
And none escap'd but those whose steeds swam o'er
The river mouth. There Robert from his sword
On Bohemond's banner wip'd the streaming gore,
And, planting it amid a slaughter'd horde
Of Moslems, sought the front, where still the battle roar'd.

CXXX.

For Godfrey now one mass'd battalion led
Against where still stood Kerbogah at bay
Before his great pavilion: o'er his head
Stream'd the green standard. For one last essay
His mailèd Agulans form'd link'd array
With the fam'd legions of Diarbekir.
While the great sun dropp'd downwards to the bay,
Fought Cross and Crescent; Death and Pain and Fear,
Flying in swift delight before wild Havoc's spear.

CXXXI.

But discipline, fix'd order, and support
Of Frank to Frank, broke up the Moslem host.
And Kerbogah saw the grim lion port
Of Godfrey ever nearer, till a frost
Of trembling fear came o'er him: panic-tost
He fled—and through the Paynim multitude
Hope sank, in flying floods of horror lost,
And in blind agony and madd'ning mood
Their legions wheel'd to flight, by Frankish swords pursu'd.

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CXXXII.

And far as eye might see from mountain crest
They fled o'er hill and plain, and fiery beams
Glar'd from the crimson'd glory of the west,
And fell with lurid hues across the streams
Of the thick flying myriads; those red gleams,
Like bursts of joy from Havoc's fiery eyes,
Fell o'er the surging host, and shrieks and screams,
Yells like unto the damn'd, and terror-cries,
Wild, hoarse, and indistinct, fill'd all the angry skies.

CXXXIII.

Such was the day to later times a shame,
For never since the Red Cross victor shone
Above the walls of Zion, has Christ's name
Been so upheld beneath the Eastern Sun:
Seven centuries since in giant steps have run,
But still the Church of Christ from His own land
Extends the suppliant arms, and Christians shun
Her woeful sight, or look with pity bland
While Moslems on her brow rewrite the shameful brand.

CXXXIV.

And long a marvel through each Orient land
Was that day by Orontes, when the might
Of Islam was wide-scatter'd e'en as sand
Is scatter'd by the whirlwind. Shameful flight
Seem'd doubly shameful from the wasted plight
Of the pursuers. Thus the countless throng
Of Moslem flying deep into the night,
That fatal day, oft wail'd in doleful song, [young.
Made Mollahs rend their beards, and drew tears from the

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CXXXV.

O Marathon, Arbela, and thou plain
Where Charles Martel made the Loire's waters red
With countless heaps of Saracenic slain,
Here too did Victory her wide wings spread
Amid the carnage fume in aspect dread,
And gave the sword of God unto the trust
Of Europe's bravest, so that Asia fled
With her barbaric hordes, whose pride and lust
So oft have trampled down the world's hope to the dust.

CXXXVI.

Yet was the victory of the Cross near won
With loss beyond account. From close pursuit
The Frank drew back some time ere set of sun;
Few were their horse, much wearied each poor brute,
Outwearied too the lame and famish'd foot;
Singly the Frank chiefs climb'd the hill and met
In Kerbogah's pavilion. Wine and fruit
And choicest viands for the Soldan set
They found, and piles of gold and silks and sarcenet.

CXXXVII.

Then Prince and Count, a-hunger'd and athirst,
Drain'd goblets deep, and squire and serving-man
Began to range the banquet, when there burst
Within the tent a breathless knight and wan
With loss of blood, which from his mail'd side ran;
"Seigneurs, the Duke, the Duke is lost!" he cried.
"Him saw I, when the Soldan flight began,
Lead round his troop in wheel up the hill-side:
Well have I watch'd, but never backward did he ride."

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CXXXVIII.

Then many a chief with goblet at his lips
Dash'd it untasted down, and all around
The knight came in hot question; but he slips
Down in a sudden faint upon the ground.
Then looking each on each as in a stound,
One cried, "Unto the Iron Gap away:
Thither full surely was the good Duke bound,
He could but take, Seigneurs, the hill-side way
To come unto the Gap, the Soldan's flight to stay."

CXXXIX.

All fly in haste apart: then shatt'ring blow
The trumpets of recall: crowds turn and look:
Tancred and Bertrand, gath'ring knights below,
Take selle; when Bertrand girth'd anew and strook
His horse in ears and shoulder, bridle took,
And leapt upon his back, the high-soul'd steed
Seem'd full with his own soul, whinnied, and shook
Proudly his head. These two then hillward lead [mead.
Their troop, while all the rest ride round by plain and

CXL.

Two hours above the city was a chasm
Well nam'd the Iron Gap, which look'd as rent
Sheer through the mountain's base with earthquake spasm;
Thro' its dark depth the swift Orontes went
Roaring in wrath, by iron sides close pent
Of cliffs black as despair, with rusty stain
As though of blood—a dizzy bridge was bent
In arch across. Right o'er a hilly chain
One way led to the bridge, another by the plain.

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CXLI.

And now, when Godfrey saw the Soldan fly
By the low way which skirted the abyss,
He joy'd within his heart, and with a cry
Led his troop up the hill: he could not miss
The Soldan so, since shorter way was his
Unto the bridge, and sorely did he long
To catch the boaster, and to make him kiss
The feet of justice for the scorn and wrong [tongue.
Which he had heap'd on Christ with impious hand and

CXLII.

And with him went his own knights of Lorraine,
Of whom the chief was Hermann; Eustace came
Next as his wont; then Gerard of Champagne,
Everard de Metz, Albert de Mauleon, lame
Of foot, but who ten men could put to shame
On horseback. On the hill-brow soon the rein
Drew Godfrey, like the hunter for his game
Looking adown the cliff, whence saw he plain
The Paynim rout sweep on like waves on stormy main.

CXLIII.

High o'er the stream of camel, steed, and man
Soon loom'd the gilded litters of th' Hareem,
Swift hurrying, and with mail-clad Agulan
Behind him, came the Soldan. Like a stream
Swept Godfrey down the cliff-road to the scream
Of frighten'd women, seiz'd the bridge, then shot
Towards the Soldan, who like hideous dream
Beheld again his foe on that dread spot:
Of little else thought he but death or captive's lot.

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CXLIV.

But fortune sav'd him. As he turn'd his back
He met the Usbek Khan, who hindermost
Remain'd in fight, and came upon his track:
His Tartars bravest of the nomad host,
And he the bravest of them. None could boast
Such deeds among the Moslem. And he curst
His fate in flight, and never to have cross'd
Swords with the great Frank Chieftain. Thus athirst
For vengeance in his heart he reckless fury nurst.

CXLV.

Full glad he heard the Frank Chief was in front,
And swore to kill or die. With chieftain look
He call'd his steel-capp'd train, well us'd to brunt
Of deadliest battle; with both spurs he strook
His mighty steppe-born steed, exulting shook
His lance, and onward dash'd with all his clan.
Warm'd with his fire, e'en Kerbogah now took
New courage, and the mail-clad Agulan
Turn'd with the Tartar horse and on the Frank Chief ran.

CXLVI.

Then grew the deadliest combat of the day,
For Dahereddin of Diarbekir
On the left bank pursued the mountain way
O'erlooking the ravine, when on his ear
Came sudden din of combat, shrieks of fear
Of women, and the dreadful horn and gong
And tymbalon boom'd deep with echoes drear,
Bellowing from cliff to cliff the hills among,
Which told when Agulans were join'd in battle throng.

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CXLVII.

And looking down he saw in eve's low light
The glitt'ring hues of blazon'd shield and crest,
And knew Duke Godfrey; with a fierce delight
He saw how few the Franks; then he too drest
His troops for combat, and down charging prest
Upon the bridge, and on the Frank rear tore,
Who then such blows struck there as still invest
That gorge with wonder, where the Syrian boor
Still hears in mountain winds the Frangi's battle-roar.

CXLVIII.

For Dahereddin with o'erwhelming might
Bore down upon the bridge, and the small band
Of the Lorrainers there fell knight by knight
Beneath the lances of dark foes who stand
Upon the parapet. With circling brand
While Franks clove Moslem horsemen face to face,
Crept Turk and Tartar low with stealthy hand
And lam'd their horses, and their cunning base
Plac'd the lone knights afoot as prey for Tartar mace.

CXLIX.

Then one hard struck, with gorget full of blood,
Crept near the Duke and said, "We are sore tried,
Dear Lord; retreat ye ere the Paynim brood [replied.
Force through the bridge." But Godfrey nought
With Eustace, Hermann, Albert, side by side,
He emptied selle by selle with light'ning stroke,
And horses riderless leapt i'th' chasm wide,
Or through the ranks behind in terror broke,
Or with shrill panic-yell the mountain echoes woke.

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CL.

And round the Duke were pil'd the turban'd dead,
In whom no corpse was whole; the Usbek Khan
Lay with one shoulder hewn off with the head;
And down the rocks a tide of crimson ran
Fast as a freshet. Then the Tartar clan
Had waver'd, but with yells of triumph trod
The Moslem through the bridge o'er the last man
Of the Lorrainers, and no hope but God [blood.
Seem'd for the Frank wedg'd firm within that glen of

CLI.

And here and there was not e'en room for proof
Of weapon: hurtling on the chasm's lip,
The very horses fought with tooth and hoof
In fury like their riders; in death-grip
Writh'd foe and foe, and wheeling blindly slip
Down the dark wild abyss. E'en in the deep
Whirl'd by the roaring tide, the foemen clip
Their deadly grasp still deadlier; down the steep [heap.
Full scores were outwards thrust from combat's gath'ring

CLII.

And here again the stealthy foemen slipt
'Neath the Frank horse with dastard knife and sword;
And some sank hamstrung down, and others ripp'd,
With soft dark piteous eyes askance their lord
Plain'd mutely, while the surging Tartar horde
Kept driving o'er them with the wave's mad force;
And in the press the frighten'd camels roar'd,
And dash'd their tow'ring bulks 'gainst man and horse,
Or rush'd down from the height in panic-driven course.

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CLIII.

And in the writhing agonizing mass
Soft beauties of th' Hareem, in silk and gauze,
Roll'd down with rolling camels, crush'd like grass
When wild bulls meet in combat. Without pause
The Frank fought like some saintly soul i'th' jaws
Of olden dragon, breathing flames of hell,
With giant coils and monstrous talon'd claws
Girdling its victim. One by one they fell,
And each upon a mass of slaughter'd infidel.

CLIV.

At length of all the Franks remain'd with breath
But five knights and two horses—Godfrey's one,
Hermann's the other; Gerard, to the death
Tho' wounded, smote as whole awhile, and none
Was without hurt; and Eustace, who as son
Was by his brother lov'd, fighting afoot,
Got on his helm a blow of weight to stun
Of mammoth race some huge-limb'd horny brute,
And sank upon his shield a nerveless weight and mute.

CLV.

Deep in his helm the Duke himself was smit,
His crest was broke, his hauberk had been spear'd
In divers places. A lance flying hit
The hollow temple of his steed, who rear'd,
Paw'd air, and fell. But Godfrey haply clear'd
The falling bulk. Then Hermann said, "I pray
Take ye my steed, dear Lord; your head rever'd
Save for the Cross, and fly by that rock-way,
While for a space we keep the Paynim brood at bay."

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CLVI.

But Godfrey look'd with such reproving awe
That Hermann felt he spoke half-foolish thing;
And the Duke said, "Fair son, we will withdraw
Up to the rock there, while I Eustace bring
Up thither, guard my back." Then did he sling
His shield behind him. Eustace, still in swoon,
He took within his arms, while foemen fling
A storm of lances at him; he reach'd soon
The jutting rock and laid his brother lightly down.

CLVII.

Everard and Albert, who were fighting still
By Hermann, rising backwards foot by foot,
And rolling cloven Paynims down the hill,
Kept Godfrey's rear; then each like pine-tree root
Clung round that rock with thin clench'd lips and [mute,
Smiting through flesh and bone. Then Albert fell
Death-wounded: wild arose the roar and hoot
As Everard sank in swoon; the Infidel,
As Hermann stood transfix'd, sent forth a wilder yell.

CLVIII.

But a fierce smile o'er Hermann's proud lips flew,
As the brave knight away the lance-head tore,
And fought till o'er his eyes blank darkness grew
With loss of blood; then said, "I can no more,
So on my soul have mercy, I implore,
O God, and save the Duke." Then all alone
With those two fainting men, the great Duke bore
The Paynim onset. Inly did he own
His sins to God, prepar'd to face th' Eternal throne.

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CLIX.

Him there at bay with sword and shield outthrown,
Tancred with Bertrand from the cliff on high
Had seen, and down path meet for goats alone
Curb'd their sure-footed steeds, and flashing by
That crag like rocks upon the foemen fly,
And crush them down in heaps; while from left height
Italian and Provençal chivalry
Shot down like avalanche in lightning flight,
And swept whole Paynim crowds into the glen's deep night.

CLX.

And while they made wild havoc of the foe,
Round from the right with gonfanon and spear
Red glitt'ring in eve's dying crimson glow,
With trumpets crashing in their hot career,
The two Counts Robert rode into the rear
Of the pale Paynim, who, like sheep from pen
When the fold opens, leapt in panic fear
Down from the cliff-brink of the roaring glen,
A cataract of arms and whirling steeds and men.

CLXI.

Then some alighting, Godfrey's knees embrac'd;
But he stept by to Eustace, who was now
Awak'ning from his swoon. Godfrey unlac'd
His helm and wip'd his lips and clear'd his brow,
And said, "Poor boy, he yet will live I trow."
Then went he to the bridge to see where fell
His knights, each thron'd upon a pile of foe;
Sobbing he said, "We will bestow them well,
For better men than these ne'er sat in knightly selle."

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CLXII.

Then Bertrand gave the Duke his own destrier;
A knight bore Eustace with him; and all went
Backwards in dark'ning eve, and far and near
Flew news the Duke was safe; new mercy sent [tent
Seem'd this from Heav'n; they brought him to the
Of Kerbogah, and crowds thick gath'ring press'd
To see him; but he said, "Let me repent
Alone with God. I stand of blame confess'd,
To peril such good knights it was a thought unblest."

CLXIII.

And thus he pass'd within the tent alone;
When Eustace there was couch'd, with leechcraft's aid
He look'd unto his hurts and to his own;
And bitterly that night he wept and pray'd,
For thought of Hermann and his true knights weigh'd
Like sin upon his soul; but through the plain
Whence torchlights scatter'd like star-legions shone
Pass'd the swift cry, "The Duke is back again."
And joyful pilgrims wav'd their torches mid the slain.

CLXIV.

For heap'd and strewn was all the battle-ground
With wrecks of nations, and the livelong night
Went pilgrims with red torches, searching round
The tangled heaps of slaughter; to the light
Turning the rigid faces; lifeless quite
One here would find a son, here one would view
A brother still in life: in pious rite
While these thus linger'd, all the night hours through
To Heav'n within the town was rais'd thanksgiving due.

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CANTO V.

CYPRUS.

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CANTO V.

I.

O MEN have then most need to watch and pray
When they affliction's desert realms have past,
And now at length they tread delightful way,
'Mid wish'd-for golden groves, where thick and fast
Delicious spells upon the soul are cast
By Siren tongues, and lolling in the glade
Joy proffers wine of plenty. O the blast
Of storm along the wild, and night's weird shade, [afraid.
Yell'd through by prowling fiends, should make them less

II.

For ah! from out the perfum'd bow'r of ease
Comes Pleasure with wild eyes and cheeks afire,
With loose locks dangling on the wanton breeze,
And nude breasts bursting from her low attire;
And with her comes insatiate Desire,
Drawing the passer-by with harlot lure.
At their bold presence fade the seraph choir
Of virtues, who till now, with presence pure,
Upheld the striving man with constant aid and sure.

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III.

Thus Victory oft, with Luxury and Excess,
Hath undone nations link'd for high emprize,
And brought great shame to well-deserv'd success.
For Folly then makes mockery of the wise:
And Pride and Envy with malignant eyes
Stalk in the light of day. Ambition's brain
Is ever working with some new surprise
For private ends, and all the long campaign
Is ruin'd to make sport for passions gross and vain.

IV.

By such temptation now the First Crusade
Was deep emperill'd, for the multitude
Found all abundance measureless array'd
Within the Moslem camp: all kinds of food,
And flocks and herds extending many a rood;
And gold and jewels, vestments stiff with gold,
And silks so boundless that each soldier rude
Was prankt in flowing splendour; crowds untold
Of mules and camels stood in each encampment's fold.

V.

There Plenty sate full-handed, and the spoil
Of the Ameer's pavilion was so vast,
That none lack'd gold; and fruits, and wine, and oil,
Came borne across the sea by sail and mast
From all the Ægean Isles. And hot and fast
Licentious joys danc'd wild without control
Around Satiety; and Passion cast
Her madd'ning spell into the winking bowl,
And rous'd delirious heat in each tumultuous soul.

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VI.

And wantons of the East, with waving arms,
    And tinkling anklets and kohl-stainèd eyes,
Stream'd to the town, and with their devilish charms
    Ensnar'd men's fancies; and wild ribald cries
    Would drown the solemn chant of Sacrifice.
E'en where the faithful few still knelt and sung,
    Athwart the air would songs profane arise;
And dicers' oaths and banquet-laughter rung,
And clashing swords aveng'd the insults of the tongue.

VII.

Forgotten were the teachings of the past,
    Their tribulations, the great mercies shown
By Heav'n amid the dark unfathom'd vast
    Of their afflictions. High Resolve o'erthrown,
    And violated vows were trampled down
Beneath Desire's wild feet into the dust;
    Repentance from them seem'd for ever flown,
And men's blood seeth'd like crimson-frothèd must,
Vext with a fury wild of luxury and lust.

VIII.

Sin o'er them, as once o'er that Hebrew race,
    Held empire aye renew'd; and they rebell'd
More horribly before Christ's sorrowing face
    Than those old wanderers. Yet the princes held
    Council most frequent how might best be quell'd
The frenzy of the host; and Godfrey's eyes
    With undiminish'd ardour still beheld
The goal of glory set to their emprize;
But 'mid the chieftains too did discord fierce arise.

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IX.

For Bohemond the Norman knew no rest;
Ambition wrought in him such fury fell,—
And hour by hour a jealous fear possess'd
Him for his city, since the citadel
He held not, though there now did sink and swell
The banner of the Cross triumphantly:
For unto Raymond's lot the fortress fell;
And Oh, it goaded Bohemond to see
The white stars of the Count thence floating fair and free.

X.

Upon the battle eve, from that stone height,
The aged Akhi Syan saw the rout
Of all the Moslem host: in bootless flight
He fell, by an Armenian singled out,
And slain. His sever'd head was borne about
The town in triumph, by a rabble throng
Of Syrians. With wild torchlight-dance, and shout,
They bore the grim, grey-bearded face along,
Which late smit every heart with terror deep and strong.

XI.

And then since Raymond held the town that day
With chosen ward, to him and to his band
The Moslems made surrender. But their sway
Vex'd deep Prince Bohemond. He secret plann'd
A cunning scheme, by means of forg'd command,
To oust the Provence chieftain from his hold:
Thus fraudfully by cunning sleight-of-hand
Gain'd Bohemond the fort, and there unroll'd
Upon the topmost tow'r his blazon'd cross of gold.

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XII.

Then bursting first in sudden fits of fire,
Then sinking silent, smould'ring in each breast,
Then breaking forth anew, contagious ire
Pass'd from the knights Provençal to the rest
Of Europe's chivalry: and, unrepress'd,
Burn'd fiercer at each outbreak, till one day
Within the market-place a bitter jest
Of soldiers meeting rous'd a sudden fray,
And show'd the secret scorn which in each bosom lay.

XIII.

Then pilgrims fought with pilgrims, and a cry
To arms rang through the city. Blood was shed
And lives were lost, and storm from far and nigh
Kept gath'ring: thither on her palfrey sped
Sibylla, and wide arms of suppliance spread,
Crying, "Have mercy, friends, have mercy due!
Have mercy on Christ's wounds! O shame, O dread!
More godless are ye than the Paynim crew; [through!"
O sheath the steel, dear friends, or pierce this bosom

XIV.

With tearful eyes, and white coif o'er the sheen
Of her gold locks, pale face, and slender form,
'Mid the dark tumult of that wrathful scene
She mov'd as moves a star amid the storm,
Threading the rack of thunder-clouds which swarm
Around the mountain summit's hoary crown.
And as she pass'd athwart the wild alarm,
Men meekly dropp'd the ruthless sword-point down,
And Murder at her sight undid his wreathèd frown.

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XV.

But though the broil was silenc'd for that day,
And on the morrow came contrition's mood,
Yet still hate's bitter growth made silent way,
And Norman and Provençal were at feud,
Till blind Occasion once again imbrued
Her hands in Christian blood. One morn it fell
Count Bertrand pass'd before the guard, who stood
Within the gateway of the citadel, [well.
And with Count Bertrand rode a knight whom he lov'd

XVI.

And as they pass'd, in converse deep intent,
Forth from the gate a cross-bow bolt took flight,
By some base knave in stealth malignant sent
Behind his fellows: and the felon's spite
Wounded the hand of that young Provence knight.
Then Bertrand, wrathful at his comrade's maim,
Spurr'd to the gate, to punish that base wight;
But all denied the deed, and none would name
The caitiff who had wrought the harm with dastard aim.

XVII.

Then follow'd angry parley, and at call
Came Bohemond, with insolent cold sneer:
And when Count Bertrand wrathful left the wall
The Norman's liegemen rais'd a mocking cheer.
That eve he challeng'd Bohemond to appear
Before the Princes in St. Peter's fane,
Where council aye was held; and tongue and ear
Were busy all the day, while still again
Hot Discord from the sword her hand could not restrain.

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XVIII.

At eve the Princes to the council stream'd
Possess'd by care and passion; down the nave
The crimson sunbeams in red lustre gleam'd
On scarf and mantle, on pale faces grave
Or fierce convuls'd with ire; like the hoarse wave
Rose hubbub of the voices, till the sound
Of Herald's cry from all did silence crave,
Saying, "O Princes, seat yourselves around;
Matters of gravest weight some will to you propound."

XIX.

Then Bertrand rose, and indignation lent
A fiery eloquence and scathing power
To all his speech; and eagerly he blent
That morn's adventure with a burning show'r
Of fierce invective. "Never day or hour,"
He cried at last, "does his insidious pride
Know rest, but ever seeks a vaster dower;
He to his ends can creep with serpent slide,
Yet oft in open scorn he hath all law defied.

XX.

"But, Princes! never has he like this day
Made league with crime and scorn of loyalty;
And I demand that he give up straightway
This culprit unto justice, or that he
Shall before all men make confession free,
And for his liegeman's crime forgiveness sue—
If he know not who wrought this treachery.
Oh, base the man, to chivalry untrue
Who would unbranded leave this deed of foulest hue."

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XXI.

Then Bohemond.—" O Princes, ye have heard
The angry railings of an angry man,
But when Provençal wits are hotly stirr'd
You know full well they are not apt to scan
Their shrewish jargon; for they love the van
Of parley, not of battle—talkers strong;
Fine stringers of the lute, aye apt to plan
Sweet pastime for gay ladies, in the throng
Of revelry superb, with jest and dance and song.

XXII.

" But we, we Normans, are of rougher grain,
Not apt to clamour o'er a little hurt
Not meant, or meant in jest; not to complain
To others are we wont in accents pert
Of our own wrongs. Yet know ye why alert
Count Bertrand's wrath against me ever flies,
Not for his friend's sake—but my poor desert
Outweigh'd his own, he thinks, within the eyes
Of a fair Princess, hence his impotent vain cries."

XXIII.

So spoke the Prince, to give another hue
To Bertrand's wrath, and that he might be stung
To madness; for he knew the taunt untrue.
Beyond his hope he rous'd him; Bertrand sprung
Off from his seat, and his right gauntlet flung
Into the face of Bohemond, and cried,
" In thy false throat thou liest. Cease, foul tongue;
To knightly trial now thou art defied:
The sword between us can alone our feud decide."

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XXIV

Then as a spasm of horror shakes the breast,
So did one throe of quiv'ring panic shake
The wide assembly at those words unblest;
For never yet Crusader dared to break
His sacred vow, all challenge to forsake
And proof of knightly trial. Though in hate
Men oft had met, yet no knight dar'd to make
Proffer of deadly combat. Mute they sate,
Till Adhemar rose up with brows fix'd stern as fate.

XXV.

"Time is it, O ye Princes, that at length
The Church should show her anger and uplift
Her voice of doom in all its awful strength.
Vain was the task of these last days to sift
And cull the chief offenders. But now, swift
Upon this impious outbreak, I declare
Her sentence. Thou, man, ne'er shall have thy shrift
For thy apostate conscience, nor a share
Of Christ's fair mercies, till thy foul sin thou repair.

XXVI.

"And he who any aid to thee shall bring
Shall stand accurst and excommunicate
E'en as thyself; nor water of the spring,
Nor wine, nor food, nor help in any state
Of sorrow or of pain shall on thee wait.
As from a leper all shall turn away,
And if thou diest, thy unhallow'd fate
Shall be to rot unburied, while for aye
Thy soul shall feel the pangs of Hell's eterne dismay.

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XXVII.

"And never for thy sin shalt thou be shriven
Until for pardon thou submissive sue
Unto the Prince of Antioch, and have given
Proof of contrition and Christ's grace anew
Earn for thy soul, by suff'ring penance due;
Barefooted and bareheaded, sheeted white,
Thus must thou sue forgiveness and pass through
The host assembled, till full in the sight
Of all thou dost renew thy vow's dishonour'd plight.

XXVIII.

"Ye know, O Princes, this vow is chief trust,
Support, and column of our great design,
To make a truce with War's insatiate lust,
And use it only for Christ's cause divine,
Till Christ again is Lord in Palestine,
Till we on Earth's most venerated place
Have rais'd the Cross and have restor'd His shrine
To sovran height; thus swore we by Christ's grace,
And all our comrades here in one love to embrace.

XXIX.

"For this great aim does in itself unite
All noblest dreams of Christian chivalry,
All the fair fancies of each errant knight
Who bore his lance, the rebel world to free
From hell's dominion. For when Christ shall be
Establish'd Victor in His Holy Land,
Then shall the Church a fairer prospect see,
And o'er the world stretch her imperial hand,
And sow the seeds of Peace on each remotest strand.

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xxx.

"And O ye Princes, from this scene of shame
Go forth with chasten'd hearts; and grace anew
Give to the people, and their zeal inflame,
That with one heart and strength all may pursue
Our mighty hope to consummation true;
For ne'er except on Salem's Holy Throne
Shall Christ's pure Spouse receive her rev'rence due.
But first, go thou, O perjur'd soul, alone,
Cut off from Christ until for this sin thou atone."

xxxi.

And as he spake, the blackness of the night
Fill'd with a starless gloom the giant nave,
While torch and taper blotch'd with lurid light
The boundless dark, and faces stern and grave
Were group'd around the flames which flickering wave
In blots of crimson o'er the seated rows,
And columns redden'd to the architrave
Loom'd from the blackness, and phantasmal glows [rose.
Shone broad beneath the dome whence the high altar

xxxii.

Beside the altar, just before the seat
Of Bohemond, stood Bertrand: dizzily
All things swam round him, while, like quiv'rings fleet
Of lightning which in summer clouds we see,
Thoughts flash'd within him; like a surging sea
From sole to crown his blood rag'd tempest-toss'd:
Anger and shame fought wild for mastery
Within his bursting brain, till darkness cross'd
His sense, and bent he stood in desolation lost.

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XXXIII.

As some lorn soul, alone and disallow'd
Of Christ, shall stand upon the judgment-day
In face of all the angels cloud on cloud,
Countless as stars which gem the milky way,
So stood he; and he felt a horror lay
Of dark annihilation o'er his mind,
As though God's face were turn'd from him for aye,
Immers'd in isolation like the blind,
Cut off from the sweet light which lightens all their kind.

XXXIV.

Yet from that eddying tumult's ghastly awe
A wish arose to Bohemond to go
And proffer friendship; but he thought he saw
A smile of triumph on his features glow,
Through the red torch-light's flick'ring ebb and flow;
He shrank back, and around him deep and strong,
Rose, like denouncing voice of angel-woe
O'er sinners unredeem'd, a wailing song,
Which roll'd its surging waves the archèd aisles along.

XXXV.

The "*Dies iræ, Dies illa*," shook
The darkness, peal'd by stolèd priests who stood
Behind the altar. Bertrand cast a look
Around the princely rows in suppliant mood;
But with blank look, each one no vestige show'd
Of recognition—all seem'd turn'd to stone;
Then indignation him with strength endued,
In that he had not really sinn'd alone,
Since Bohemond first on him had insult foully thrown.

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XXXVI.

Then as a man smit with a grievous wound
Knows he is hurt, yet has a dreamy thought
That he is not, so Bertrand in weird stound
Pass'd down a lane of faces, as he sought
The portal; yet still going all distraught,
His sense of wrong increas'd, and put to rout
All other feeling. Indignation brought
Such strength renew'd, that when he stepp'd without,
Self-pride within him spurn'd behind all dread and doubt.

XXXVII.

Wild through the town hot Riot dinn'd and scream'd
As thus in turbulence of brain and blood
He pass'd along, and crowds of roysterers stream'd
Along the streets, and in his fever'd mood
He loath'd the stir of that disorder rude
And breath of orgy, and with footsteps fast
He sought the ruin'd tracts where wreck'd and strew'd
Was all the earth with ruins of the past,
And shatter'd temples mourn'd o'er columns headlong cast.

XXXVIII.

For the old giant city still possess'd
Great breadths of antique glory in her walls,
Temple, and arch, and palace, where her nest
The owl now made,—whose iterated call
Alone at midnight stirr'd the desert hall,
Abandon'd trophies of the great of yore;
For Antioch before th' imperial fall
Of Rome's colossal might the proud name bore
Of Empress of the East in old Hellenic lore.

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XXXIX.

By ranks of columns glist'ning in the moon,
And cypress-rows where many a sombre cone
Was black against the stars, Count Bertrand soon
Came to an amphitheatre of stone, [grown,
Whose frowning form, with shrubs and trees o'er-
Limn'd a fantastic outline on the sky,
Where arches rank'd o'er arches, zone on zone,
Elliptic rose on every side on high,—
Where nations sat to see the gladiator die.

XL.

Here, too, the pagan, with a hungry heart,
Had gloated on the lacerated limbs
Of martyr'd Christians, who, amid the smart
Of death, pour'd out to Christ their fervent hymns;
As now the pale moon o'er th' arena swims,
Chequ'ring the Cirque with pallid light and shade,
And shining down the rent and ragged rims
Of shatter'd stonework, Bertrand entrance made [nade.
Through one black arch which pierc'd the monstrous colon-

XLI.

Still as the grave and tender sweet as sleep
Was the grand quiet of that awful place;
Black yawn'd the sombre mouths of caverns deep
Around the wide arena's half-lit space;
The moon's white radiance silver'd with sweet grace
The grim black wounds of Ruin's anger rude;
The ash and myrtle, touch'd with flying trace
Of silver, in their verd'rous darkness stood,
And were by soft night-airs on cliff-like summits woo'd.

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XLII.

Ah! strange that in such relics of the Past
Such records of man's cruelty and pride
Should live a charm which seldom fails to cast
A soothing calm upon the whirling tide
Of man's hot frenzy—that such walls beside
The pangs of self are lull'd upon the sea
Of Universal Being and subside,
That as by secret sense we breathe and see
God's presence in the stones of old Antiquity.

XLIII.

Doubtless the spirit of departed days,
Which was a portion of th' Eternal will,
Speaks to the soul a mystic voice of praise,—
That she, in spite of age and chance and ill,
The world's great destiny does still fulfil;
That from the darkest years of olden time
The works of men continue vital still,
And breathe in us a sympathy sublime
Which makes us heirs in soul of every age and clime.

XLIV.

The fiery beatings of Count Bertrand's soul
Sank from their furnace heat, and o'er the loud
Wild tumults of his breast sweet silence stole,
And a sweet sense as of a dewy cloud
Wrapt round his brain's fierce fervour, and he bow'd
His face upon his hand, as seat he took
Upon a shatter'd cornice—while a crowd
Of angel pinions with a calm bright look
Smil'd on the dying storm which late his bosom shook.

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XLV.

If in the chasten'd calmness of his mood
There was a sense inscrutable and drear
Of life's dark teachings—of the servitude
Of best men to the worst—of hate and fear
Pursuing aye the noblest—and the tear
Of Virtue anguish'd at the cruel scorn
With which men tread on all she doth revere—
He thought on Him rejected and forlorn
Who wore before the crowd the mocking crown of thorn.

XLVI.

Oft in the glow of pure resolve and high,
In the pure communings of inner thought,
When the rapt soul adoringly doth lie
Before the veil, to intuitions brought
Which have new sense of hidden glories caught,—
Oft doth the world's wrong sink away and fade
Into the realms of inessential nought,
All unsubstantial as the shapes of shade
With which the fancies wild of children are dismay'd.

XLVII.

Such sweet transfusing grace comes from above
Into the yearning soul—then as from dream,
All panting trembling with Eternal Love,
It wakes and knows pain's law again supreme
Within the world, and hears the harpy-scream
Of Earth's dark furies rav'ning for their prey.
But mid the ghastly shapes which flock and stream
Around its isolation, Christ alway
Holds forth His sorrow-crown as beacon on its way.

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XLVIII.

If in the commune of that solemn place
Count Bertrand's spirit reach'd not clearest height
Of saintly aspiration, yet new grace
Fed it so full of vivifying light
That there at once beneath the starry night
He grasp'd resolve to make atonement due
For his profanèd vow,—to do aright
Such penance as prescrib'd, and then to sue
For pardon unto him from whom this sorrow grew.

XLIX.

Forgiveness, gentlest child of Gospel Truth,
Who with Humility dost love to dwell,
And saintly Mercy and divinest Ruth,
There is no seraph whom the fiends of Hell
Fear more than thee; thy smile a withering spell
Is to their strength malignant, and they flee
As at the clang of Doom's eternal knell,
Leaving the heart for Christ's dear presence free,
For chiefly does He love His sons who walk with thee.

L.

Thus Bertrand's soul grew calm beneath the night
With the calm quiet of that desert track,
And he arose, with footsteps soft and light
Repassing down the rows of cypress black,
The moonlit piles of Desolation's wrack;
Alone he heard athwart the rustling trees
The whooping owlet and the howling pack
Of wild dog and of jackal on the breeze,
From where they tore the slain in ghastly companies.

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LI.

Yet best resolves are often brought to nought,
By breath of circumstance our aims are sway'd;
Through various impulse was Count Bertrand brought
To change of mind, and new resolve he made
Upon the morrow; for still undismay'd
Disorder fill'd the town with fury wild,
And all best hopes were scatter'd and betray'd,
And Norman and Provençal still revil'd
Each other deep in hate, nor would be reconcil'd.

LII.

Loth too were Bertrand's friends forsooth that he
Should now stoop to the Norman, and bring shame
Anew upon Provençal chivalry;
And since he had a thought that time would tame
The madness of the multitude, there came
A plan into his heart to leave awhile
The city, and to cross the seas where fame
Still bath'd in glory each Ægean isle,
Whence gleam'd across the wave full many a column'd pile.

LIII.

And since the Church's ban still on him lay,
Alone of all his followers he took
One page, his falconer, and huntsman grey,
Who never him in good or ill forsook.
A fair Greek galley, whose lithe sail-tips shook
Impatient, by the harbour mole was moor'd;
Accord Count Bertrand with the captain strook,
And with his men and chests for travel stor'd,
Horse, hounds, and cast of hawks were quickly lodg'd on [board.

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LIV.

While on the shore his bann'd and lonely fate
And his hard sentence wrapt in gloom his soul,
So that he envied every meaner state,—
The sun-burnt Greeks who loll'd upon the mole,
The straining toilers who for daily dole
Stoop'd beneath burdens from shipboard to shore;
The thought that he was swerving from the goal
Of Christendom's aspiring, wildly tore
His heart with pangs more sharp than e'er he felt before.

LV.

Yet when the vessel fill'd with sudden life
Mov'd forth into the deep, and rowers threw
The green wave from them with concordant strife,
All cloudless as the broad sky's cloudless blue
Count Bertrand's soul within him sudden grew;
And when across the harbour bar they ran,
Where the curl'd waves with fresher fleetness flew,
From out the round horizon's purple span [man.
New freedom fill'd his soul with more than strength of

LVI.

A fair breeze strain'd the bosom of each sail,
The rowers laid their useless oars aside,
The foaming keel-track left a flashing trail
Which faded like a dream upon the tide.
And Bertrand felt the good ship plunge in pride
Like some brave steed, as on the prow he stood
And watch'd the wide seas o'er the dancing side
Of the heel'd galley, while the foresail good
Most bravely dash'd the prow across each surging flood.

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LVII.

The fair ship sprang and bounded on its way
As bounds the wild deer o'er the heathery leas;
The green wave flash'd out into feathery spray,
And the sail sway'd o'er as the ocean breeze
With breath unwearied curl'd anew the seas;
The ship-planks throb and tremble with delight
As dauntless-hearted on her path she flees,
And joy as measureless as is the height
Of heav'n was in the speed of her exulting flight.

LVIII.

None feel such joy save he whose heart is good—
Save he whose faith is undiminish'd still
In God, and man, and nature. From such mood
The spirit soars exulting, doubt and ill
No longer sway the liberated will,
And mingling with the flow of waves and wind,
Self dies with rapture, and high visions kill
The lustful senses, while the eager mind [behind.
Bounds with the bounding bark and leaves earth's chains

LIX.

For sea and land and air are ever rife
With noble counsel to a noble heart,
Fair exhortations to a higher life.
Alas for him who with perverted art
Seeks to enrage his passion's fiery smart
With Nature's ministration, and impale
His soul more deeply on the venom'd dart
Of desperation, whose hot lungs inhale
And turn to poison-breath each sweet and healthful gale.

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LX.

Onwards they sail'd as o'er his western arc
The sun with unseen steps slid down and threw
A hue of glory over wave and bark,
Dilating ere his death as great men do,
Who, standing long within the public view
Shorn of their due proportions by the spite
Of meaner men, yet in their grandeur due
Sometimes appear a little ere the night
Of death obscures for aye their lives from mortal sight.

LXI.

The night-winds rose and shook from pauseless wing
The dew-drops on the deck; each wave in glee
Leapt up to clasp some silver star and fling
Its mimic lustre back; the purple sea
Was pav'd with moonlit lustre on the lee,
And into Bertrand's soul the calm peace crept
Of Eve's sweet effluence; while in harmony
The seamen's voices through a soft hymn swept,
All pray'd the Virgin's grace to aid them ere they slept.

LXII.

Soon breath'd the crew below in quiet sleep,
Only the night-watch and the helmsman staid
With open eyes upon the starry deep;
And Bertrand pass'd unto the poop and laid
His form upon the deck-planks black with shade;
His ermin'd mantle over him he drew,
Athwart the stars the black sails danc'd and sway'd
Before his eyes till slumber seiz'd them too; [through.
And fann'd by ocean-airs he dream'd the night hours

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LXIII.

When his eyes open'd to the morning beam
He rose and o'er the bulwarks saw afar
On mountain peaks a rosy tinted gleam,
Then all his heart burn'd like a burning scar,
He felt revive his passion's ancient war;
For there he knew the Cypriote isle to lie,
The home of her the white and peerless star
Of his fond fancies; as they fleeted by
He watch'd the happy coasts with yearning soul and eye.

LXIV.

Oft in his ear Desire's soft voice he heard,
"Thither go thou and seek the happiness
Whose thought is madness." Ah! his soul was stirr'd,
And he grew dizzy with the wild excess
Of sweet imaginings; yet from out the stress
Of thronging fancies his resolve at last
Rose victor, to avoid the false caress
Of such temptation, in his purpose fast
To render penance due when some few days were past.

LXV.

For like reproachful phantoms, sad and slow
Before his eyes the past hours mov'd along,
In which high hope had made his bosom glow
With the pure aims of Chivalry and Song;
And his soul yearn'd with fervour fresh and strong
To rear again Christ's Cross in Palestine.
And ah! perchance before the host's full throng
His self-humiliation might combine
Once more their jarring breasts to serve the cause divine.

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LXVI.

For one example of self-sacrifice
Is oft a bond of peace and unity,
A star of guidance unto countless eyes.
And thinking thus, and looking o'er the sea,
Count Bertrand saw a Grecian argosy,
Bearing athwart their track; with strange delight
Did Bertrand watch its motions fair and free
As it came swelling down upon the right.
A sail to men at sea is aye a royal sight.

LXVII.

And as he look'd a wreathèd veil of smoke
Curl'd round the snowy sails, and from the hold
Dark crimson spurts of flame in fury broke,
And quick from stem to stern the wild flames roll'd,
And did their crests like dragons red unfold,
Waving in triumph. Soon the sea below
Was black with swimmers: one cried, "Lo! Behold
That old man on the poop will burn, I trow;
He fears his agèd form into the sea to throw."

LXVIII.

But urg'd by Bertrand o'er the waves now flew
Two shallops to their aid, who safely brought
That agèd Greek, and of the struggling crew
Great numbers, so that with new burden fraught
The galley labour'd, and the Greeks besought
The Franks with tears to take them to the port
Of Cyprus, which they late so gaily sought,
On mission bound for that far-famed resort
Where Athenäis held her faëry pageant court.

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LXIX.

Thus often comes temptation in the face
Of stern resolve to try men's hearts anew,
And then they seize such hazard as a grace
And augury of Heav'n, that they may woo
The self-same lures which late they did eschew.
As Bertrand yielded to that old man's prayer,
All things around him took another hue,
And expectation smil'd with visage fair
As now towards the shore with veering prow they bare.

LXX.

And as they float along unto the isle,
A faint perfume of violets fills the gale,—
The purple flanks of each peak'd mountain-pile
Sandall'd with green luxuriance, hill and dale
Stand forth in sweep harmonious as they sail
On to the rising shore; sheer cliffs of grey
Surround the marge, save where a gorge-like vale
Ran from within unto the rocky bay,
Where, like half-hidden nest, Arsinoë's haven lay.

LXXI.

A rocky headland, like an arm outthrown
Clasping the sea, Arsinoë's haven made—
Whence curl'd a deep firth, like a sapphire zone
Thrown down by some fair empress disarray'd;
Blue Ocean roll'd beneath the plum'd cliffs' shade
A tract of waveless azure, on whose sleep
Fine feathery shapes of rock-born foliage play'd.
There pine and cedar crown'd each dizzy steep,
And slept with mirror'd grace within the gleaming deep.

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LXXII.

O Cyprus! from the incense of thy fanes,
Where white-stol'd priests to Aphrodite sung,
From thy fair hills and temple-crownèd plains,
Around thy name there is a glamour flung,
From which the bards of every classic tongue
Caught new-born inspiration, and they drew
Thy faëry scenes in verse for ever young,
And Fancy lent them each ideal hue
Till to the poet-mind thou gleamed'st a vision new.

LXXIII.

Yet those, who saw thee ere the loathsome taint
Of Turkish rule disrob'd thee of thy grace,
Had little need of Fancy's aid to paint
Thy glowing splendours, when the princely race
Of Ducas held thee for a dwelling-place,
And all their wealth and care on thee was spent
To cherish in thee each resplendent trace
Of old Hellenic glory, and they blent
The culture of each clime throughout thy fair extent.

LXXIV.

It was a land where Pleasure with Delight
Might wander all the day, from the first dawn
Of sunrise, when the golden floods of light
Surg'd o'er each mountain-crest; then wood and lawn
Glisten'd in dewy splendour, threads o'erdrawn
Of silky gossamer with elfin beads
Of opal quiver'd, as the rousing fawn
Went from his lair to seek the clover meads,
Or wade across the mere through dew-besilver'd reeds.

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LXXV.

Clear as rock-crystal of light golden hue
And unflaw'd bright transparency, the morn
Advanc'd, and from the purple distance blew
Fair breezes in the cool of ocean born,
Rifling the flower-woods of acacia thorn,
The myrtle thickets and the groves of balm,
They hover'd o'er the vineyards and the corn,
And shook the feather'd crest of every palm
And wak'd each minstrel bird amid the forest's calm.

LXXVI.

And ere the night-dew faded from the blade,
The playful hares along the grass would run,
Leaving a green trail on the hoary glade;
The peacocks then would sit within the sun
Upon the sweeping branch, and one by one
Uplift their radiant fans of emerald eyes
To dry the night-damp: where the sunbeams shone
Throng'd crimson pheasants, birds of Paradise,
And the Sultana bird wav'd wings of azure dyes.

LXXVII.

Then rosy-breasted doves and flame-wing'd cranes
Would flock from out the woods, whose depths among
The golden oriole, in flute-like strains,
Would call unto the skylark; while in song
The bulbul sent his soul forth soft and strong,
And from its feather'd throat each bird would fling
Harmonious undernotes; then all along
The flow'ry slopes would dance and wave and spring
Bright clouds of butterflies on gemm'd and radiant wing.

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LXXVIII.

Some sapphire-pinion'd, ruby-wingèd some,
More bright-hued others than the peacock's eyes;
Then golden bees would flit with simmering hum
Round rose and violet, lading their small thighs
With liquid sweet; then filmy-wingèd flies
And midges forth would swarm, and in wild strife
Blue swallows flash among them, with sharp cries
Of exultation, as all air grew rife
With the soft murmuring glow and stir of insect life.

LXXIX.

There too gazelles and timid antelopes,
And deer half hidden in the palmy fern,
Would catch the eye upon long hilly slopes;
There, round some rosy peak, one might discern
The ibex clust'ring; there the crested hern,
'Mid rushy spots of fen upon the green;
White oxen couch'd in woody cirques would churn
The pasture, or troop slowly o'er the scene,
While tusk'd boars held their lair in many a far ravine.

LXXX.

And Ocean here put on his gentlest smile,
And sent still creeks of sea-blue far inland,
And lake-like waters, folding many an isle
And cypress-planted cape: the Titan bland
Caress'd as softly as an infant's hand
Each grassy marge and cliff whose roseate face
Was tufted o'er with myrtle; silvery sand
He strow'd within each grot, where bathing-place
Might be for Dian's nymphs after the hot-breath'd chase.

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LXXXI.

Chief where the Princess held her palace-seat
Did green Luxuriance spread her fruits of gold,
Her feather'd palms and groves of citron, sweet
With odorous blossom; silvery waters roll'd
Adown the rocky steep, whence temples old
Stood gleaming o'er the vales with watchful look,
Whence might be seen the azure streams unfold
Their devious course, as though they ill could brook
To leave the green repose of each well-wooded nook.

LXXXII.

Nor wanted on the marge of lake and stream,
Rear'd in some fair acclivity's green slope,
White column'd fanes, which threw a quivering gleam
Upon the waves' deep azure: here metope
Triglyph and frieze and plinth, like ruin'd Hope,
Lay heap'd in fragments; while o'er all the wreck
Wild vine and ivy wove a tangled cope
Of mantling verdure, as though Love would deck
The ravage of Decay it could no longer check.

LXXXIII.

Here the acanthus with crisp leaves would swell
About the prostrate capital, and there
Half hid in depths of blossoming asphodel
The broken cornice, wrought with sculpture rare,
Lay 'neath the columns which its burden bare;
And here grots deep and dark of masonry,
Screen'd e'en at noon-day from the sun's hot glare,
Told of the spot where erst in luxury
Patrician Lords of Rome had dwelt beside the sea.

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LXXXIV.

And Summer revell'd there in constant strength,
    And cast o'er all her gorgeous loveliness,—
Clothing the graceful elms in all their length
    With trailing parasites, whose radiant dress
    Of starry petals never waxèd less;
Where fell the blossom, there the calix new
    Of white or crimson from its sheath did press,
Nor did the deep-moss'd sward e'er change its hue,
As sea-flowers evergreen, with night's unfailing dew.

LXXXV.

O'er turquoise waters droop'd the laurel-rose,
    There the pink lotus sprang to meet the day
Upon the blue canals; and round each close
    Of flow'r-enamell'd mead and by each way,
    The blue-green aloe stood, the perfum'd bay,
Pink oleanders, and magnolia trees;
    Frequent the cedars' purple shadows lay
Across the lawns,—the red anemones
And beds of tulips wav'd in every slumb'rous breeze.

LXXXVI.

And close around the palace, all the ground
    Was as engarlanded with chequer'd sheen
Of gemlike hues—in flower-beds square and round,
    And diamond-carven, fair walks wound between,
    Of grass smooth-shaven, ever soft and green
As emerald moss on some oak's lichen'd girth
    In sun-proof woods. Ne'er wreath of Faëry Queen
Had fairer flowers than these, though all the earth
The Elves should ever search for buds of choicest worth.

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LXXXVII.

There fluted vases were for ever flush'd
With large, soft ruby bells and cups of blue,
And trailing stars of lilac blossoms gush'd
From out their lips; the perfum'd tuberose grew
Within their depths, and over all outthrew
Impassion'd odour; in unceasing play
Fair fountains leapt; the marble Titan blew
Tall jets of diamond, feather'd into spray;
And nymphs in jasmine bow'rs from ewers pour'd alway.

LXXXVIII.

And all the air was full of languid ease,
Which charm'd the blood and stole the soul away;
Nor did the cool breath of the dawning breeze
Restore the flaccid nerve; and night and day
One languor on the sense, like perfume, lay;—
One faint voluptuous sweetness fill'd the vein,
And soft desire men's hearts did ever sway,
To fly hard travail as a deadly bane,
To know the joy of Life and little of its pain.

LXXXIX.

Against the azure sky the palace rose
In bulk majestic, like the glorious pile
Which some great painter on the canvas throws,
Rapt with high visions of fair Circe's Isle
Or Dido's golden City—to beguile
The eyes of Fancy with some glimpse divine
Of her bright Poet-world. Yet Art's fond smile
Ne'er dwelt with ravishment on such design
As here, like golden dream, lay buoy'd upon the brine.

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XC.

The terrac'd heights of that fair edifice,
In structure manifold, spread o'er a rock
Which loom'd afar like some Acropolis
Of old Hellenic city: the faint shock
Of the soft inland sea did gently rock
Beneath the platform's marble balustrade
On shining stairs of marble, where a flock
Of whitest swans, was ever gently sway'd
Beside the flaming gold of barges close array'd.

XCI.

From base to crown uprose in column'd tiers
The alabaster height—white terraces
And marble flights of stairs on dizzy piers,
And hanging gardens, whence tall-stemm'd pine-trees
Lifted their cloud-like heads, with galleries
Of fretted gold, with towers of silver sheen;
Till, more aërial soaring by degrees,
Pavilion'd ever by the blue serene,
Crystalline golden domes and fane-like roofs were seen.

XCII.

For there had art in gorgeous harmony
Conjoin'd Moresque and Grecian form and line,
Corinthian grace and Arab tracery,
In one rich mass their glories to combine:
The Doric shafts and frieze of classic shrine,
The fair façade with fretted niche of gold,
The dome Byzantine, and the pillars fine
Which Saracenic vaults, like flowers, uphold,
Round which rich arabesques are intricately scroll'd.

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XCIII.

And with all styles the artist so had wrought,
That no confusion was, but every one
To higher grace its fellow's contrast brought.
The central structure was of amber stone,
Which, with its domes and spires, sat like a throne.
Round its wide court, away from portals tall
As gates of old Persepolis, a zone
Of colonnade reach'd either palace-wall,
And frequent statues stood on airy pedestal.

XCIV.

Here liv'd the Princess, of her land's disgrace
Most conscious; she abhorr'd the servile state
Of Byzant, and its faithless courtier race.
In shame and scorn she felt the hapless fate
Of her dear country, where fear, lust, and hate
On its torn vitals ceaselessly made prey,—
Where coward fraud alone, with look elate,
Made traffic of its dark and evil day,
And fatten'd on the spoil of its obscene decay.

XCV.

She had inhal'd the glory of the ages,
The light which glow'd once in her famous land,
For much the deathless Past's recording pages
She had unfolded with a ling'ring hand;
And like white embers to new brilliance fann'd
By unseen winds, old glories in her grew.
The Godlike forms, so delicately grand,
Of ancient art she lovingly would view,
And from their calm pure grace her soul new lustre drew.

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XCVI.

Thus had she chosen here to dwell apart,
In maiden isolation, and she sought
The choicest masters of each finer art
To renovate the past; and she had bought
At costliest price each marble marvel, wrought
By sculptors old, to make her palace brave;
And fair companions hither too she brought,
And that old sire whom Bertrand late did save
Was of her father's friends, an old man good and grave.

XCVII.

And Zeno too, for such the old man's name,
Mourn'd the bewilder'd fortunes of his time;
His mind, too, lit up by the thoughts of flame
Of ancient freedom, nourish'd dreams sublime;
But all great aspiration was a crime
Among that race deprav'd, and he pass'd through
Sorrow and bondage in his youthful prime,
Until the sire of Athenäis knew
His noble heart, and him unto his service drew.

XCVIII.

And he, when Bertrand sav'd him, on that morn
Was sailing from Byzant on homeward wind,
For he had been unto the Golden Horn
On matters of high import, and to find
New spearmen, since the Princess now design'd
A stronger troop to guard her island's weal:
For frequent piracy did then unbind
Its sails along the sea—and none can feel
Secure when half the world has bared War's reckless steel.

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XCIX.

And when the old man to the Princess told [drew
That morn's mischance, and how the Frank chief
Him from the wreck in fiery fury roll'd,
She sent to give the stranger welcome due
Unto her isle; and forth a galley flew
At her command across the still lagoon
To bring the Frank knight, for as yet she knew
Nought of the chieftain's name: returning soon [boon.
The rowers brought the knight with beating heart and

C.

His brain throbb'd wildly to the heaven's deep blue,
And rapture seem'd to film his streaming eyes,
As like a golden dream the palace grew
From out the emerald wave against the skies;
And through his thought an ever-fresh surprise
Flutter'd, as o'er the water he drew near
Unto the bourne of Fancy's hopes and sighs.
O sovran grace of Life! Enchantment dear!
O Love, with trembling voice my muse invokes thee here!

CI.

For Poesy, like any maid, doth yearn
Some fond sweet tale of lovers to repeat.
Heroic strains themselves grow cold and stern,
When love comes not their majesty to heat;
Since without love all song is incomplete,
As youth itself lives aimless, drear and lorn,
Until its pulse full tremblingly doth beat
To Love's soft murmur, and the soul new-born
Breathes the surprising air of Love's delicious morn.

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CII.

O star of Life! sweet soul of modern days!
Fond spirit, yearning pure of soul for soul,
Without whose fair society, nor grace
Nor strength is perfect, who towards the goal
Of time, in thy harmonious control,
The nations of the world dost ever sway,
To thee I turn, as to the starry pole
The seaman turns to seek the one pure ray
Which gives him heart and hope on his uncertain way.

CIII.

Thy grace divine throughout the Universe,
Eternally descending, can endue
All things with radiance, and the darkest curse
Of drear mortality with some clear hue
Of heaven-born glory; and as woods anew
Burst into song as soon as storm is o'er,
And all the sky is domed with sunny blue,
E'en such a season art thou evermore
Unto the hearts which do thy blessed worth adore.

CIV.

The magic of thy presence doth transfuse
The dull gross meshes of our mortal clay;
The bonds of sense then melt away like dews
Within the noontide beam; earth fades away:
From star to star, on some star-paven way,
The soul triumphant walks, upheld by thee,
And in the light of that diviner day
It doth behold fair visions, doom'd to be
The utmost goal and hope of our humanity.

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CV.

For Music, Painting, Sculpture, Poesy,
And all the Arts which stretch the mind's expanse,
And change man's grossness and his cruelty,
Spring into life beneath thy starry glance.
Thine are the faëry glades of fair Romance,
Its fountain-heads and Eden-margin'd streams;
And as the ages flow in swift advance
Purer become the fond prophetic Dreams
Which these fair spirits weave of Hope's immortal beams.

CVI.

Beyond the narrow bounds of earth and day
We feel that thou art Lord, and we revere
Each record faint of thy eternal sway;
And Hero's shriek and Desdemona's tear
To all remain imperishably dear.
An empire's woes may often vainly seek
The ready homage of attention's ear,
But sighs of antique lovers grow not weak
To touch with pallid ruth the breathless maiden's cheek.

CVII.

Nor marvel is it if we brood and doat
On love's faint sighs borne down from ages dim;
And the soft sobbings of a maid's white throat
Have touch'd with ruth the hearts of warriors grim,
And made the eyes of wisdom blindly swim
With tears pathetic, and escap'd the roar
Of dark oblivion's tide, whose sullen rim
Creeps year by year along Time's wreckstrewn shore,
And o'er each empire's grave rolls silent evermore.

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CVIII.

For love transcends the bounds of time and space;
Its essence is impalpable as light,
And all created things in its embrace
Do lie, the while it spinneth day and night
The warp and woof of Being. Oh, its might
Is universal, and round it doth turn,
As round some central sun, the order bright
Of all intelligence: like planets yearn
All good thoughts to their light fit homage to return.

CIX.

O Love, O Poesy, O Faith, O Youth,
Uphold the world upon your heights sublime,
Keep pure the wells of ever-living Truth,
And from the soul disperse the mists of Time:
Though he who dares unto your tracts to climb
Must rise or sink in self-contempt and shame,
Branded with failure like a secret crime,
Yet true endeavour shall absolve the aim,
Although the steps be faint upon the steep of fame.

CX.

Seasons there are when on the troubled face
Of mortal state, diviner spirits brood
And grow incarnate in our fallen race.
Then are there some more inwardly imbued
With the new inspirations, hearts endued
To feel more vividly the throb and strain
Of Time's new birth in quick prophetic mood;
And such was Bertrand, who for bliss or bane
Felt the impassion'd age in every bounding vein.

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CXI.

For as before the coming step of day
The earth's horizon widens all around,
And Ocean's caverns feel the growing ray,
So in the light of Love the soul's dark bound
Grew wider in that age: its depths profound
Felt the new spirit's splendour-darting flight,
And it beheld with newer glory crown'd
The form of woman, whose sweet eyes more bright
Beam'd with the new-born rays of heaven-descended light;

CXII.

And on all gentle hearts the revelation
Of the divine in woman, wrought like spring
A boundless joy and quenchless inspiration,
And gave celestial strength to Fancy's wing—
For Poesy in purer notes to sing
Learnt at the radiant shrine of gentle worth;
And in the heart of poet, saint, and king,
The noble school of Chivalry had birth,
In Beauty's name to cleanse the foul and blood-stain'd [earth.

CXIII.

'Mid the enchanted glades of high Romance,
Rapt by the glorious passion of the days,
Each nobler spirit wander'd; some in trance
Beheld ideal beauties, in whose praise
They spent their lives, and fashion'd mystic lays.
Flash'd with the high contagion, others sigh'd
Responsive, with touch'd hearts and yearning gaze,
Seeking among the maidens far and wide
To find within the flesh the soul's ideal bride.

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CXIV.

And many died adoring still a dream,
Which, unfulfill'd on earth, their spirits freed
From sin and lust: and in the Eternal beam
Of Heav'n's own glory they receiv'd the meed
Of their pure aspirations: some, through greed
Of Earth's corporeal beauty, were untrue
Unto their fair ideal's noble creed,
And yet by Faith and Constancy they threw
Around the thing they loved, Love's own celestial hue.

CXV.

But moral worth in body fair combin'd,
Like a rich jewel in fit casket kept—
This was the dream of every noble mind;
And Bertrand, whose young soul had early leapt
To Provence lutes by Passion's fingers swept,
Yearn'd as the violet yearns in summer drought,
With yearnings fond and fair which never slept.
With trembling heart and dewy eyes he sought
To find in mortal forms the idol of his thought.

CXVI.

Ah! yes, he long'd as gentle spirits long,—
Nurs'd on the strength of all things good and fair
In the great School of Chivalry and Song,—
To hold in spirit such communion rare,
The mystery of being so to share
With love, which thus a haven sure might be,
Out of the stress and storm of outward care,
A tablet white, where he might ever see
The best thoughts of his soul portray'd immutably.

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CXVII.

A dream of youth, and purity, and grace,
Of Life enspher'd in Love's beatitude,
And Earth imparadis'd by one fair face,
Lifted his spirit to exultant mood:
Oft the bright cheek of gentle maidenhood,
The mystic contact of a virgin palm,
Rous'd a rich tremor in his kindling blood,
And one sweet glance would stir his spirits calm,
As minster aisles are stirr'd by organ-sounded psalm.

CXVIII.

Yet though his eyes had paus'd in dear delight
On many a maiden form and radiant face,
None sway'd his soul with such subduing might
As Athenäis: her imperial grace
Swept from his soul each sweet and ling'ring trace
Of former fond enchantments,—yet soon he
Essay'd to check his passion's headlong race.
Ah! bitter ever must the conflict be,
When Love and Duty strive for inward mastery.

CXIX.

Alas for him whom Beauty moves like wine,
And sends voluptuous madness through the vein;
In whom the grace of form, and hue, and line,
Make vibrant sense and soul in heart and brain;
Who feels like flame his fancy wax and wane,
With Beauty's exaltation, yet to height
Of purest aspirations would attain:
For phantom gleams of many a dear delight
Shall lure his steps by day and mar his dreams by night.

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CXX.

Such doom was Bertrand's, when he felt the spell
Of Beauty in imperial form display'd;
But in his heart, as in a citadel,
His pure resolves a steadfast refuge made,
And while his senses all were madly sway'd
By the insurgent passions, there lay wait
Till absence came their ancient force to aid,
And they resum'd once more their former state,
And fill'd the Future's dark with Visions fair and great.

CXXI.

But now Occasion's saint-seducing smile
Lured him again within the charmèd sphere
Of that fair wonder in her Cypriote Isle;
And since to state of Isolation drear,
Temptations, blandishments, more fair appear,
And to the outcast and abandon'd mood
The cup of Pleasure has a charm more dear:
Thus Beauty now with threefold empire woo'd
The Frank knight's exil'd heart unto its bright abode.

CXXII.

And as the bark drew near the shining marge
Count Bertrand saw the old man Zeno stand
Expectant for him, and from out the barge
In knightly courtesy he wav'd his hand:
Soon o'er the vessel's side he stept to land
Upon the slabbèd stairs, and Zeno press'd
His young preserver's hand, and welcome bland
Spoke tenderly; and, turning, he address'd
A courtier crowd, who bow'd due welcome to their guest.

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CXXIII.

Up the broad stairs of marble rosy-hued
They pass'd from flight to flight, and held their way
In courteous converse: many times they stood
And look'd across the shining lake, which lay
In beauty bright below them, where each bay
Mirror'd a thousand hues in azure sheen;
And then the eyes would wander far away,
And trace the blue stream in the dark ravine,
And up the mountain-side pursue the wooded green.

CXXIV.

Then from the sapphire-gleaming sky, the range
Of purple distance, and the fair champaign,
From bosky tract and corn-land, and the change
Of hill, and vale, and vine-enwreathèd plain,
A glowing exaltation fill'd the brain
Of Bertrand, and his soul was overrun
With Earth's magnificence, and joy, and pain,
And thought and feeling were absorb'd in one
Bright sense of splendour, as shades melt before the sun.

CXXV.

His Being seem'd in Beauty's magic air
With more etherial life to pulse and dance,
And in the glow of all the glory there
To walk sublime as in enchanted trance,
As through a golden region of Romance,
With half-unconscious steps, he upwards went.
White marble forms and sculptur'd vases glance
Along the balustrades; in grand ascent
The fair perspective lines towards each other leant.

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CXXVI.

Here from the over-soaring rock would bound
The blue lymph in a basin finely hew'd,
While Grecian nymphs in groups stood all around,
With ewers tall in varied attitude.
Apart within the sunlight one maid stood
With vase in hand, as lingering to see
The guest arriving: youthful sitters view'd
From the white steps the sun-illumin'd sea;
And there two sages talk'd in all tranquillity.

CXXVII.

They reach'd the platform where the palace stood,
By art made level on the mountain side,
Which rose up northwards, clothed with chestnut wood
Up to the rosy peak—cliffs crimson-dyed
O'erhung the level—while the stone-pine vied
With date-palm to enhance the marble grace
Of the white structures; sphinxes solemn-eyed
Guarded the entrance to an open space,
And to the left was seen a temple's column'd face.

CXXVIII.

And on the steps stood men of Grecian mien,
Rob'd like Athenian patriarchs of yore—
Some in the light of Wisdom's ray serene
Majestic stood; and some, though young no more,
Yet Learning's passion still with aspect hoar
Sublimely cherish'd, learning each of each,
Well pleas'd to add one tittle to the store
Of high Philosophy; some seem'd to teach
By geometric lines, and some by earnest speech.

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CXXIX.

And here and there the charmèd eye would rest
On scenes such as great painters love to dream,
And with the pomp eternal to invest
Of Art's most gorgeous hues.—By Arno's stream,
Or where the marble domes of Venice gleam
Within the wave, such glorious visions aye
Make this dull life more nobly regal seem:
Vistas of builded splendour, where blue day
Shines through fair columns white on guests in rich array.

CXXX.

Here, by a fountain, you a group might see
Of youths and maids reclin'd in classic grace,
List'ning to tales of Love and Poesy;
There some, return'd but newly from the chase,
The day's adventures would by turn retrace;
There sweet musicians play'd in concords fine
Unto a banquet crowd,—with busy pace
Some golden ewers bore, full-charg'd with wine,
And Beauty shone o'er all in hue, and form, and line.

CXXXI.

Count Bertrand saw each changing prospect there
Without surprise, but with a still delight,
For every shape wore a familiar air
As though in antenatal realms of light,
Beyond the taint of sin and sorrow's blight,
Such forms he had in primal glory seen;
E'en so Art lifts us to such tranquil height
When it unveils from life's confusèd screen
The archetypal grace of human form and mien.

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CXXXII.

Nor wanted painting's grand and gorgeous hues,
Nor sculptur'd form in stainless glory wrought—
God, Nymph, and Faun, and Attic-vested Muse,
The marble language of eternal thought.
Within a central fount a car was fraught
With Neptune, who a barbèd trident bore,
With flaggy feet his ocean horses fought
Against the stream which ever fell before,
Around the Tritons grim, with waters swift and hoar.

CXXXIII.

The gate within the palace-court which led
Triumphal stood with lofty arch and wide,
And sculptur'd frieze: Apollo charioted
Four horses on its summit, side by side,
In bronze colossal. By the archway ride
Fair youths in bronze, they sit brow-crown'd with stars,
Bare-limb'd on rearing-steeds in graceful pride.
Upon the frieze, steeds, elephants, and cars,
And armèd hosts portray young Alexander's wars.

CXXXIV.

Within the court two golden fountains threw
Tall azure jets aye wreath'd in foaming white,
Which morn and eve with many a rainbow hue
Were dy'd, and plash'd throughout the balmy night;
And further on blood-stain'd in eve's rich light
A fair extent of shining water lay,
Within whose crystal depths that palace bright
Was mirror'd ever in intenser day:
Spires, domes, and pillar'd arch in mimic flickering play.

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CXXXV.

Count Bertrand with his agèd leader went
Down an arcade whose ogive-archèd side
Look'd o'er the wide champaign, then made ascent
Up the broad stairs unto a portal wide,
With mouldings carv'd and intricate. They eyed
Awhile the gilt-bronze doors, all rarely wrought
With scenes Homeric,—here Patroclus died,
There Hector stalk'd, and there Achilles fought,
There Priam's agèd hands for his slain son besought.

CXXXVI.

A master-work it was of Greek design—
Heroic, rich in thought, in depth sublime—
Man's life in every passion grand and fine
Portray'd concretely, true for every time,
Yet with simplicity of classic prime
Severely stamp'd; and there from mortal state
The mind was led to starry heights to climb
Of stern Olympian council, and the fate
Of Troy in balance hung by Gods in high debate.

CXXXVII.

Thence passing on, at each step more and more
Art's glories shone, on every side display'd;
The fluted columns of gilt marble bore
Fine roofs of fretted gold, by Painting's aid
With Poetry of human form array'd;
Here did the eagle Ganymede upbear;
There Leda with the swan's snow plumage play'd;
And the ripe glowing lines of form so fair
With human glory fill'd the warm impassion'd air.

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CXXXVIII.

The pillar'd walls with orient marbles gleam'd,
Fine-gilded, and thereon was richly dight
Full many a legend fair—divinely dream'd
By the Hellenic mind in the clear light
Of its imperial youth, to be delight
Eternal—with eternal wisdom fraught;
And Grecian wisdom there, and Roman might
Were limn'd in many a scene—where Art had caught
The grandeur of each age in fair embodied thought.

CXXXIX.

And the bright hues of costliest tapestry
Were hung o'er many a wall—some rival'd well
The painter's skill; and scenes of Arcady
Were woven fair—there in the wooded dell
White maids would cull fair flowers of asphodel;
There shepherd boys discourse 'mid mingled flocks;
There lovers linger'd by a forest well;
There Pan at eve piped silence from the rocks, [locks.
And there on river banks the wood-nymphs tress'd their

CXL.

Tables there were of carven citron wood—
And nothing there but was a trophy fine
Of Art's transforming grace; gold caskets glow'd,
Graven and gemm'd; and like a fairy shrine
The cabinet stood, a marvel of design,
Whose inlaid work of endless patience told:
Blue vases show the softly-swelling line;
Seats shone like thrones of ivory and gold;
And candelabra gleam'd of peerless classic mould.

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CXLI.

And there on many a pedestal was rear'd
The faultless splendour of man's form refin'd
To majesty divine, the brow and beard
Of Zeus Olympian, Ocean's strength confin'd
In limbs colossal—and the stainless mind
Of Pallas, in colossal calmness seen;
Apollo loos'd his arrow on the wind;
And Venus in her loveliness serene
Still look'd with drooping grace the Graces' peerless Queen.

CXLII.

And Bertrand pass'd along from hall to hall,
With footsteps echoing o'er the marble floor.
Then to a room they came more bright than all,
With purple hangings dropt before a door.
These swift aside two Greeks, attendants, bore
At sight of Zeno, and both enter'd there;
Within, a courtier, bow'd with years and hoar,
Led them across the chamber, unto where
A terrac'd square lay free unto the western air.

CXLIII.

And there without a garden space they found,
Of flowers and orange-trees, some steps below
The palace basement, and a temple, round
As some fair fane of Vesta; in eve's glow
Its columns shone like rosy-tinted snow;
Beyond the balustrade, sheer o'er the bay
It hung, on airy height; thence constant flow
Was heard of converse manifold and gay,
Which paus'd while one sang forth a softly-sounding lay.

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CXLIV.

"Youth walks Hope's garden dreaming of the morrow,
And earth seems heav'n, and man almost divine;
O'er his bright sky swift grows a cloud of sorrow,
And all his flowers droop down their heads and pine,
And on his crimson cheek creeps pale decline.
Spring doth its heart's blood on the rose-leaf lay,
And stains with dying hands the eglantine;
The Rose and Beauty are but for a day:
O Rose! O Beauty! why do ye thus haste away?

CXLV.

"O queenly Rose! O Empress of the morning,
Ere noon thy royal pomp dissolves and dies!
O Beauty! thou in all thy brave adorning,
Art but some vision'd glory of sunrise,
Which from the mountain tarn ere daylight flies:
Spring doth its heart's blood on the rose-leaf lay,
And gives its odour with its latest sighs,
The Rose and Beauty are but for a day:
O Rose! O Beauty! why do ye thus haste away?"

CXLVI.

The ditty, like some strange and rich perfume,
Haunted the inmost chambers of the brain,
More sweet than odorous breath of citron bloom:
The Princess, rais'd above her courtier train,
Mus'd on the echo of the dying strain,
When Bertrand saw her half-averted face,
And stept within the threshold of the fane.
In sooth, her fair form's perfect moulded grace,
The sovran glory gleam'd of that enchanted place.

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CXLVII.

She leans her glance upon the western sea,
And tender thoughts bedew'd her shining eyes,
The while her left foot play'd unconsciously
Upon a leopard's throat, who sidewards lies,
And sheathes his claws, and strikes in gentlest wise
Her buskin'd ankle. On her knee there leant
A Turkish maiden couch'd in Eastern guise,
With eyes on her. In front a Greek maid bent
Looking in thought upon her trembling instrument.

CXLVIII.

They shook the Princess off her trance's spell:
"Too sad, in truth, thy music is to-night,
My sweet Agläe; 'tis not good to dwell
On thoughts more dark than deep, for no delight
Dies in the heart if apprehended right;
Upon so sad a strain thou must not rest,
So strike, I pray thee, now a chord more light."
But here Ayesha—for 'twas she whose breast
Leant on the lady's knee—beheld the coming guest.

CXLIX.

Joy and surprise uprais'd her to her feet,
And then the Princess turn'd towards the door,
And with half exclamation murmur'd sweet
A welcome; and across the Parian floor
Count Bertrand hasten'd, bending more and more
In courtesy, until he reach'd his knee.
Ah, like some happy prince of fairy lore
He felt, I ween, when he outstretch'd did see
That fair hand which he kiss'd in dreamless ecstasy.

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CL.

And when, with forc'd composure on his brow,
He rose, he met Ayesha's beaming look
Bent on him: in her eyes a starlike glow
Of trembling eagerness; her fair form shook
Like the bright sunbeam in a dancing brook,
As with uncertain purpose, red and pale
With sweet confusion, till the Frank knight took
Her hand with pulses quiv'ring as the frail
Young Rose who pants to hear the love-lorn nightingale.

CLI.

For since that eve when he on her despair
Had rush'd and torn her from death's icy hold,
Her memory trac'd him e'en as Gabriel fair
And brave as Zal, the lord of legends old;
And she,—ne'er hair-entwisted coins of gold
Or orient robes bedeck'd a fairer maid;—
An amber sash about her waist was roll'd,
Her unclos'd violet tunic left display'd
Her roundly moulded form in rosy silk array'd.

CLII.

A vision bright as is the rosy peak
Of Hermon, seen on crimson summer eves.
There was a coral hid within her cheek,
Clear as the drops the wounded pheasant leaves
Along the snowy banks; the russet sheaves
Are not more amber than her hair's rich twist;
The dreamy grace of drooping palm-tree leaves
Was in her pliant form; neck, waist, and wrist [amethyst.
Gleam'd with large amber beads, and pearl, and

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CLIII.

Though over all supreme in Beauty beam'd
The Princess, yet no maiden there the less
Was beautiful beside her; nay, it seem'd
That they partook of her own loveliness.
As some fair temple in a wood's recess
Robs not a charm from all the sylvan space
Around it, but imparts of its excess,
So Athenäis in imperial grace
Of her companions' charms no lustre did efface.

CLIV.

Then in a stream of talk they wound about
The marvels of late days—how east and west
Were stirr'd at tidings of the Moslem rout;
And Bertrand then his banish'd fate confess'd,—
How and through whom he bore the stern behest
Of exile, till he had atonement wrought
For outrage of his vow. While thus her guest
Rehears'd his tale, the Princess wrapt in thought
Hung on his words, for her with kindred mystery fraught.

CLV.

And Bertrand saw that each time as he spake
Of Bohemond, her colour came and went,
And that her bosom shook as though 'twould break
Her tunic's fine composure; and she leant
With eager ear to grasp his soul's intent
E'en ere he spake, and drink the coming phrase.
Then dim suspicion from his heart found vent,
And lost itself in many darkling ways,
While Bohemond's vile taunt made darker his amaze.

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CLVI.

But still, so soon the lady did renew
Her languid grace, that Bertrand quickly stay'd
His jealous vision longer to pursue,
Deeming that phantasy perchance had made
The dim, dark fear that on his spirit weigh'd;
Then to chang'd theme their talk more lightly ran,
The while Agläe random snatches play'd
Upon her lute, and purple eve began
With silent-growing shade the nearer vales to span.

CLVII.

And now the sun hung on the ocean marge,
Majestic in his fall as great hearts are
When doom is on them; now his crimson targe
Sunk silently, till like a flaming star
It hung above the red horizon's bar;
Then vanish'd quite, leaving the golden skies
Rob'd in his glories, so that Eve, afar,
Sat her adown all pale with balmy sighs,
And veil'd with either hand her trembling, tearful eyes.

CLVIII.

All nature seem'd expectantly to rest,
Till the red skies had burn'd themselves away.
The Princess rose and led her Frankish guest
Unto the balustrade—the calm lake lay
Steep'd in the splendours of the dying day,
From many a gliding bark the eerie swell
Of plaintive music trembled o'er the bay,
And round the shore was many a fair chapelle
Which chimèd each to each upon the vesper bell.

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CLIX.

Pale Hesper soon upon the brow of night
Hangs like a beacon of eternal hope,
And all the stars creep trembling with delight,
Each to its station on the sky's blue cope,
And from the lake, hill, plain, and mountain slope,
A myriad tapers pierce the balmy air
As darkness gathers round the vision's scope,
Mute witnesses that human life and care,
In hamlet, hall, or cot, are waking everywhere.

CLX.

Ended was even-song—one vesper chime
Rang faintly, swinging from a distant tower;
And Bertrand, heartfull with the happy time,
Was inly holden by its silent power,
The speechless endless quiet of the hour.
Fain would he still have linger'd, for 'twas long
Since he had known the calm of lady's bower;
But now the Princess left him with her throng,
And Zeno led him back those faëry halls along.

CLXI.

He brought him to a table richly strown,
Where a gay company at banquet sate,
And after song and music he was shown
Unto his chamber, where he found to wait
His men and his equipment. All the state
Of that rich palace seem'd most strange and new,
After the hard chance of campaigner's fate;
But soon his frame upon his couch he threw,
And slept, and dreamed such dreams as happy lovers do.

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CANTO VI.

URANIA.

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CANTO VI.

I.

GONE is the dear delight of fäery land,
Or lives alone in childhood's happy smile:
What Poet's sail seeks now the amber sand
Which shelves around Enchantment's purple isle?
O fond Simplicity, devoid of guile,
Art thou then fled for ever? Shall the sway
Of mean ambitions daily grow more vile?
And Fancy never-more dare to display
Its bright Armida-realms bath'd in her sunniest ray?

II.

O Tasso! who with princely step didst tread
On soil heroic, where I falt'ring go,
Though man did heap on thy devoted head
More wrongs than e'en is Poet's wont below,
A frëer air did round thy temples blow
Ev'n in the darkness of thy stony cell;
A poet-age kept free thy spirit's glow,
Ten thousand hearts with thine did rise and swell,
In one detested head thy fount of ill did dwell.

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III.

And from thy dungeon bars thy glorious song
Was caught by peasant, bandit, gondolier,
And flew forth palaces and courts among;
While Art, her kindred Poet's soul to cheer,
Soar'd with broad wing to Heav'n's serenest sphere.
And Titian, Tintoret, and Veronese,
O'er palace, dome and fane, threw glories clear
Of legion'd forms, whose glowing, gorgeous rays
Still, like Creation's works, with primal splendour blaze.

IV.

And thou, sweet Spenser! from whose knightly soul
This measure first in full perfection burst,
Thou heard'st afar Torquato's echoes roll,
And on them fed thy heart's divinest thirst;
And with thy stainless Sydney at Penshurst,
Or Raleigh in some alder-shaded place,
By Mulla's wave their melody rehears'd:
Then didst thy Faëry Queen's dear empire trace,
Both Poets, heroes both, they gave thee heart and grace.

V.

What though they died of misery and wrong,
Their spirits liv'd beyond the reach of shame,
And wore serene the saintly crown of song,
Secure of noble welcome and acclaim.
Now sceptic Cunning mocks each Poet's aim
To touch the age's heedless, headlong mood;
Nor finer spirits can, self-centred, claim
Lives of high-thought with calm-brow'd Quietude,
With whom men found erewhile the leisure to be good.

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VI.

Yet still some gentle few shall ever yearn
For a new haunt where Fancy may retreat,
And ever still shall some most purely burn
To holier shrines to lead young Passion's feet,
And newer chords to fit with glamour sweet
Unto the harp of Life; and still the brave
Shall on Song's echoes feed heroic heat
With him who murmur'd on Canadian wave
Gray's deathless lines before he sought a hero's grave.

VII.

For dark and drear and monstrous is the time
Which has no poet feeling at its heart,
Which has no yearning tragic or sublime,
But finds its inspiration, and its art,
In the hot clamour of the varying mart,
And in the self-applause of sordid aim,
Which feels no sorrow as great dreams depart,
When high Romance is brought to grief and shame
Beneath the cynic's spite for deeds of purest fame.

VIII.

For Poesy is as Spring's balmy breath,
The world's sweet youth-restorer,—when it dies
Language and art grow rigid unto death;
It is the moon to which thought's sea must rise,
Or rot in gloom 'neath pestilential skies,
For unto Poesy alone is given
Wand of creative power; its light re-dyes
The faded tints of Earth with hues of Heaven,
And feeds all nature's mass with true æthereal leaven.

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IX.

And here its love part must my song repeat,
Here where it trembles most to venture on,
For Oh, what loveless song is e'er complete,
What poet liv'd who never dream'd upon
Some tale of love which tender maids might con,
Couch'd on their balmy beds by taper-light,
With night's chimes ringing ever and anon
Unto their heedless ears?—such fond delight
Should hold their pearlèd lids from slumber half the night.

X.

Now dropp'd the ripen'd apples from the tree,
And the rich clusters of the vine were crush'd
With pipe, and song, and dance, and festal glee,
And sunburnt youths and maidens, laughter-flush'd,
Danc'd round the vats from whence the red wine
And vintagers were purpled to the knees, [gush'd,
Nor was the sound of song and joyaunce hush'd
Till deep into the night, and all the leas
With golden-rinded fruits made rich the mellow breeze.

XI.

Still did the rose its crimson youth renew,
And parasites put on their starry sheen;
Still violets smil'd through tears of morning dew;
Still cloth'd were chestnut-woods in untouch'd green,
But myrtles flower'd on banks of each ravine,
And golden-starr'd with orbs of orange-red
Were green arbutus-woods: for all unseen
Autumn had come, while Summer's languid tread
Was still beside the brook and mossy fountain-head.

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XII.

Yet though the hours with pleasure were more rife
Than all the honey cells of autumn's bees
With clammy sweetness, Bertrand's heart, at strife
With its own self, could find nor rest nor ease
For its tumultuous storms: each balmy breeze
Enhanc'd its warring anguish—day by day,
And week by week, he look'd upon the seas,
In half resolve to sail at once away,
But still within that isle he made remorseful stay.

XIII.

For as a courtier all dependent on
Great men for favour knows no constant state,
Now flush'd with hope, now desolate and wan,
While day by day his early cares and late
Are spent in vain; so there did Bertrand wait,
Feeding his passion on its own fond bane,
Now pining like a ghost, now high elate,
Fever'd with fancied triumph, soon again
To be dissolv'd in air and mourn'd with anguish vain.

XIV.

For Athenäis, peerlessly endow'd
With youth and state and beauty, knew full well
The art of woman, her own soul to shroud
In fair reserve; hers was each magic spell
Which Beauty lends to summon or repel
The eyes of young Desire; one cold grave look
Would be to Passion as the passing bell
Of all his fondest dreams, and at rebuke [shook.
Of her clos'd lips Joy's wings with nerveless tremblings

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XV.

Sometimes like Venus, on lip, eye, and cheek
She wore a constant smile; her gracious mien
Would render bold the trembling will and weak,
Free, kind, and facile as the Goddess-Queen
Whose altars still within that isle were seen:
But when meek adoration forward grew,
Her look like Dian's was cold, calm, serene,
And in Junonian majesty she drew
Pride round her like a robe of viewless woof and hue.

XVI.

Well could she lure with fascinating wile
The doubting heart, to open like a flower
Within the sunshine of her syren smile;
And from her Beauty's rich imperial dower
She could imparadise the darkest hour
Of hopes forlornest, and each drooping thought
Would rise exultant in the beaming power
Of her most radiant presence, till it caught
New frenzy, doom'd to pine in Passion's unslak'd drought.

XVII.

Well could she feign incredulous to take,
In alien sense, the words ambition dar'd
To falter: she could, coldly gracious, make
Desire faint-hearted, yet leave unimpair'd
Her empire in the soul, for rev'rence shar'd
The shame of love's repulse, and sooth'd its woe:
So that none ever utterly despair'd,
And aye some ray of mercy would she show,
Which through disdain's light cloud would intermittent [glow.

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XVIII.

Yet so harmonious was each change of mood
That none could tell which air became her best—
Sedate or gay; and nought abrupt or rude
Was in her seen. But she herself express'd
By slightest turn of head or fold of vest,
By easy grace of languid dignity,
Or by her mien self-gather'd or possess'd.
Each play of limb or feature follow'd free,
As though attun'd unto some inward melody.

XIX.

Such was she—a most royal paragon
Of womanhood, by subtlest art refin'd:
In whom civility it seem'd outshone
The gifts of nature, when it but combin'd
With them to mould each grace of form and mind.
And Bertrand, from the memorable hour
Of his arrival, felt his sense entwin'd
As in a magic web of her weird power,
Which did all strength of will in heart and mind devour.

XX.

Sometimes so gracious in her mood was she,
That all her nature seem'd to bathe him round,
Like sunshine rippling through a summer tree;
Sometimes a gentle languor would abound
Within her voice, and with the silver sound
In concord, the blue softness of her eye
Would swathe the soul in such delicious stound,
She would so breathe in still suppressèd sighs,
That Bertrand seem'd in thought to grasp the wondrous [prize.

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XXI.

Then, without seeming purpose, would she throw
Aside the well-aim'd shaft of Love's intent,
And with a smile make slack the bended bow
Of firm resolve, so that she often sent
Bertrand away with his own fate content,
And with heart steep'd in sweetness to the core;
Nor would the fond illusive dream be spent
Until he sought to see her face once more,
When some contriv'd pretence would close her presence [door.

XXII.

Then felt he like some golden bird of song
To Northern mist from sunny region borne,
Which sits and stinteth darkling all day long,
Ruffling its tiny plumes, a thing forlorn:
Thus to his darken'd sense both night and morn
Brought equal weariness: each glorious scene
Wore mournful aspect, of all beauty shorn:
The stars above shone pitiless and keen,
Nor music had the wave, nor joy had forest green.

XXIII.

Then, after days of absence, would she send
Light embassies of grace and courtesy,
With leave upon the Princess to attend,
Or join perchance her queenly company,
When she her pastime took by land or sea;
In huntress garb then oft she would appear,
And then with him by wooded hill and lea
She would pursue the boar with gilded spear,
Or with her silver voice the tow'ring falcon cheer.

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XXIV.

Then Bertrand pass'd such days as happiest men
But once within their lives can ever know,—
Days of deep joy by mountain wood and glen,
Now swift and strong, now ling'ring soft and low;
And Athenäis' cheek would roseate glow,
And in her eyes new radiance would be lit
As she would feel her being ebb and flow
In rhythmic concord with the rein and bit,
And on her eager steed in flexile grace would sit.

XXV.

Theirs was the bloom of life's delicious prime,
The honey-time of youth which ne'er again
Will steep the senses in a golden clime,
But flies and leaves us to delights more vain;
And Bertrand felt the time in ev'ry vein
Run with a spring-like flow,—no joy more fair
Knew he on earth than by the bridle-rein
Of the belov'd to ride—her thoughts to share,
With pastime of delight in that delicious air.

XXVI.

For many a morn at early dawn they went,
While yet the dew upon the leaf was bright,
Beneath the blue and stainless firmament,
In robes as gay as their own spirits dight,
With sounds of horn and bells, and laughter light,
Young men and grave, and ladies passing fair,
Huntsmen with dogs on leashes straining tight,
Or hounds at large wild snuffling everywhere,
While falconers on perch their tassel gentles bear.

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XXVII.

The Arab steeds the bossy bit would champ
With foamy mouth and snort with conscious pride,
And tread all daintily and bound and ramp
In proud caparison, as on they hied
By sunny paths, trac'd o'er the heathery side
Of swelling hills, or through the long arcade
Of forest trees, where gnarlèd oaks defied
The mid-day sun, and where in verd'rous shade
The mossy turf beneath their hoofs no echoes made.

XXVIII.

Clearer delight no joyous heart can feel
Than thus to revel in the day's campaign,
From morn to eve; like some rich bridal peal
The spirits ring their changes in the brain:
This is war's mimicry without its bane,
Its madness and its crime. We thus partake
Of man's primæval liberty again;
For sweet civility doth pastime make
Of what the first men did for simple hunger's sake.

XXIX.

The shepherd from the hills would mark afar
The goodly company wind o'er the plain;
The waggoner would draw his creaking car
And milk-white steers aside to let the train
Pass by in narrow ways; the goatherd fain
Would lean down from his rocky height to trace
Their march in mountain pass; the forest swain
Would joy to see them reach the sylvan space,
Where they design'd to hold the day's appointed chace.

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XXX.

Where'er they went they made bright holiday,
And to them ran each simple villager
To stare upon their robes and trappings gay,
Purfled with pearl and gold in diaper,
And silk and damask. All from plume to spur
Were flutt'ring with one life from first to last,
Feather and fold with motion all astir,
Like the gay pennons on each galley's mast,
When on the rustling breeze the gallant fleet flies fast.

XXXI.

The huntress maidens beautiful as light,
The courtier crowd and all the company,
Would drink the breeze of motion with delight,
And of that island air the buoyancy
And balmy fragrance made sweet melody
In heart and brain, and aye the varied sweep
Of landscape-line, the vista o'er the sea,
The mountain form, the gorge or wooded steep,
Both eye and heart in sweet activity would keep.

XXXII.

They pass'd white villages and well-till'd leas,
Where tree to tree was chain'd by wreaths of vine;
They pass'd hill slopes, where giant cedar-trees
Slept o'er their shadows, and the cloud-capt pine
Stood dark upon the mountain's wavy line;
They pass'd deep valleys, where the hazel rod
Sprang up from myrtles matted with woodbine,—
Into the heart of forests, where the sod
Was worn in mossy ways which none but deer had trod.

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XXXIII.

For Nature's forms, which are the inspiration
Of fancy, thought, and sacred poesy,
In which the mind adores the revelation
Of majesty divine, were there to see,
In such diverse and grand variety
That every prospect was in plan and hue
More like some painter's gorgeous fantasy,
Than any scene of earth, and did imbue
The ravish'd sense each day in ecstasy anew.

XXXIV.

And in the clear Elysian golden air,
A soft-hued glory to all nature clung,
And rock and cliff and craggy buttress bare
Blush'd limpidly—a golden glory hung
O'er wave and waterfall: the woods among,
Through overhanging depths of emerald, dight
With endless tracery, the gold beam sprung
Into the inmost dells, where glowworms bright
Aye lit their unseen lamps, and glimmer'd all the night.

XXXV.

Pleasant it was for those who lov'd the stir
Of noble venery, to burst and break
The silence of the forest, and to hear
The hounds their musical sweet uproar make,
And see them diving through the tangled brake;
To hear their voices far away and near,
Till in full choir their clamours would awake,
When from the thicket they would rouse the deer,
Or start the tuskèd boar beside the forest mere.

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XXXVI.

Oft then the hare and rabbit scurried by,
And oft the peacock harshly screaming rose,
And oft the pheasant whirring forth would fly
Athwart the trees, rous'd by these woodland foes;
And oft the beaters of the game would close
In narrowing circle round a forest glade
Of smooth green lawn, when with their shafts and [bows
The hunting train promiscuous havoc made
Of all the sylvan beasts which dwell in forest shade.

XXXVII.

And at such time it chanc'd one day a boar,
Rous'd from his lair, within the circle dash'd
Upon the hounds with havoc, wounding sore [gash'd
This dog and that: some paunch-ripp'd lay, some
In neck and chest; the rest, all unabash'd,
Still hemm'd the hairy brute, and a fair hound
Of Athenäis in the beast's neck gnash'd
His teeth relentless, reckless of a wound.
His mistress from her steed sent forth a piteous sound.

XXXVIII.

Then Bertrand leapt among the dogs on foot
With boar-spear pois'd in hand, and drove the steel
Deep by the shoulder-bone. The monstrous brute
Charg'd blindly at him, who with flying heel
Leapt o'er his rushing bulk, nor thought to deal
Another stroke. Yet still the wild beast tare
In headlong course; till as with upward keel
The vessel rolls which tempests overbear,
So roll'd he all at once with four hoofs in the air.

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XXXIX.

Yet while he rush'd with spear-shaft in his side
As though the wound were naught, all eager bent
Their bows in aim around the circle wide.
And Athenäis too, all eager, sent
A well-aim'd shaft in one swift volley blent
With others. But her restless Arab rear'd
Just as she loos'd the shaft with true intent.
The random arrow struck a branch and veer'd, [shear'd.
And from the Frank knight's cheek the skin and scarf-skin

XL.

Bertrand, intent upon his thrust, felt not
Or scarce the blow, until the light wound bled
Drops on his hand; and none knew whose the shot
Save Athenäis, who wax'd pale and red,
While from her vermeil lip its brightness fled;
Then shortly after took her homeward way,
Saying the sun was too hot overhead.
Nor would she share the hunt's repast that day,
Which in a woodland cirque was spread in fair array.

XLI.

For often, when the morning chace was done,
Before the heat of noon they would repair
To where pavilions glitter'd in the sun,
With gilded poles and streamers: menials there
From pannier'd mules would draw forth dainties rare,
Viands and fruits, and flasks of Cyprus wine,
Bright-gleaming, clear as topaz-tinted air,
Cool from snow baskets, and all then would dine
Right merrily, the while in groups they would recline.

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XLII.

Then would they sit awhile jocund and boon,
And one would sing or tell a merry tale;
'Neath the declining sun of afternoon
They would prolong delight till twilight pale
Came creeping onwards o'er each island vale;
Then would they wend their homeward way at ease,
In gay triumphal march, while yet the quail
Was piping in the stubble-field, and bees
Still hover'd round the tufts of clover on the leas.

XLIII.

And Bertrand, as their guest, they would entreat
With gentle courtesy, and oft invent
New pastime for his sake. Each fair retreat
Within the isle, each shatter'd monument
Of glories gone, by ages torn and rent,
Would be occasion thitherward to roam—
To pass a day in sunburnt merriment,
And in some column'd pile of Greece and Rome
They would in freedom fix a momentary home.

XLIV.

Nor wanted oft (since Bertrand deftly spake
The Grecian tongue) pastime for graver mood.
When tragedy the hearts of men would shake
With show of royal sorrow, and the good
Oppress'd by destiny; Cassandra rued
Her deep foreknowledge, and the vulture's claw
Tore the dear friend of man; hell hags pursued
Orestes, and the scene's pathetic awe
Made all adore the truth of sorrow's sacred law.

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XLV.

Nor wanted comic interlude nor strain
    Of lyric song with Doric flute and lyre,—
All that could soften, elevate, and chain
    The fascinated soul and wake the fire
    Of noblest passion and refine desire;
Oft music on the waters there would be,
    And chorus-chaunt, and sound of thrillèd wire
Beneath the starlight, swam deliciously
From golden barks lamp-lit upon the island sea.

XLVI.

In such fair Revelry the Frank knight felt
    Scarce like a breather of earth's troublous air,
And in his soul each pleasant scene would melt.
    All happy as the steed of beauty rare
    Which did his lady's gentle burden bear,
He thought not of the future: blithe and gay,
    He only knew the present time was fair;
He let his Poet-nature have its way,
Which like the humming-bird drinks life in sunny ray.

XLVII.

Such hours, indeed, are Life's most pleasant boon
    To gentle hearts, and fond Love has no dream
More sweet than this at morn and eve and noon;
    To revel in fair haunts, which fairer seem
    With the deep glamour and enchanted gleam
Which float around the ruins of old time,
    By forest, hill, and legendary stream,
In the clear brilliance of an Eden clime,
Where Autumn's roses fear no harsh untimely rime.

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XLVIII.

And Athenäis in the ray serene
Of radiant beauty mov'd, and seem'd by right
Of peerless loveliness to be the queen
Of all around her, and the sweet delight
Of her fair presence mov'd a sunnier light
O'er Bertrand's thoughts; his glory was so great
He dar'd not own it to himself aright,
But rested in the passive, charmèd state
In which the stoniest hearts become effeminate.

XLIX.

Such inspiration high, transcending thought
And consciousness, possess'd his ardent soul;
Ineffable in strength, for when he sought
To give it speech, his words without control
Would swerve aside and never reach the goal.
Yet the rapt gaze of casual-meeting eyes,
The sympathetic smiles which softly stole
From lip to lip, and alternating sighs,
Would make a language meet for Love's deep mysteries.

L.

In sweet forgetfulness of self and time
He pass'd with Joy's light foot through Pleasure's maze;
With pulses ringing like a marriage chime,
He trod the paths of those delightful ways,
Content enough to hold within his gaze
The form belov'd. The mutual glance and glow,
The spirit-thrilling touch, which oft betrays
The secret which the lips dare not allow,
Were the events which made the hours melodious flow.

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LI.

For love can ne'er speak out its benison,—
A look, a smile, a fugitive caress,
These are the trophies which it doats upon;
Since words are vain its glory to express,
Or probe its depths of speechless tenderness,
When the lost Eden comes back to the sense,
When the immense desire and power to bless,
In airiest things the ecstasy intense
Recall man's primal state of stainless innocence.

LII.

And nothing in this boundless world of sense
But seem'd for him with finer grace endued;
Link'd with his joy in harmony immense,
The mid-day sun shone down in softer mood,
And fairer stars gemm'd night's empurpled hood;
More sweet seem'd pipe of bird and hum of bee,
The tender blooms of flow'rs more rainbow-hued;
More sweetly whisper'd brook and leavy tree,
And eves more golden ting'd a softer-sapphir'd sea.

LIII.

And thus was Bertrand lost within a dream
Of vast and pathless passion—by the sway
Of soft enchantment wafted on the stream
Of deep Felicity—yet would he pray
Oft inwardly occasion to array
His yearnings fond in language, and to stake
All hope at hazard like a cast-away,
Who must his island sov'reignty forsake
And trust to frailest bark alone for human sake.

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LIV.

Yet once he dar'd essay a Poet's art.
    At eve upon the terrace o'er the bay
They stood a little from the rest apart;
    And Bertrand spoke of a Provençal lay
    As of another's, though self-made that day.
The burden was, "*Ay! Reyna, ay! no m fi.*"
    But Athenäis quickly turn'd away
At the first verse, and join'd the company,
And left him all alone blank-gazing on the sea.

LV.

Then oft words died upon his trembling tongue:
    Why should he mar the present, and lay bare
The baselessness of hopes which twin'd and clung
    Round all his hope of being?—ah! why tear
    Illusion's veil and see perchance despair
In gaunt deformity?—ah! why not drain
    The cup of pleasure while it sparkled fair
Before his lip?—why not account as gain [remain?
The good each day brought forth and in sweet doubt

LVI.

Thus with his beating heart he would debate,
    When with impatient yearnings it would glow,
Yet oft in hours of converse intimate,
    The pure fount of emotion would o'erflow
    In high impassion'd language, which would show
With what pure strength his noble soul was fraught,—
    A faith as pure as virgin Alpine snow,
In all good impulse, and all generous thought,
And in man's life through Christ to holier freedom brought.

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LVII.

He lov'd to speak of high heroic feat,
Of deeds chivalric done and to be done,
And his young cheek would flush with crimson heat
As he would speak of triumphs to be won
In new-found ways, of empires just begun,
The glory and the grace of future days,
And how the pow'rs of wrong should one by one
Be vanquish'd in the world, and earth's dark ways
Be more and more illum'd by Truth's eternal rays.

LVIII.

He lov'd to stand upon the brink of time
And look into the future, and there see
God's presence clear as in the olden prime;
And he had faith that all humanity
Should burst its bonds and stand erect and free,
All Slavery be deem'd a leprous bane,
And that the touch of Love should mightier be
Than goads of steel, and that the gentle reign
Of sympathy should stay the cries of want and pain.

LIX.

For oft hath Fancy thus its prophet mood,
When as from Pisgah it can distant scan
The Land of Promise, where deliv'rance good
Shall come unto the weary foot of man;
Then doth it pierce the Future's wondrous plan,
When nobler forms of social life shall break
Full half the curse of Sorrow's awful ban,
When grander justice, simpler laws, shall make
The best thoughts of each heart in sovran strength awake.

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LX.

Dreams had he thus of evangelic Truth
Growing in majesty from age to age,
When larger reverence and gentler ruth
Should mitigate the ravage and the rage
Of power and avarice, and should assuage
The lust of conquest and revengeful hate;
And thus each epoch should become new gage
Of that divine equality of state
Which doth both high and low eternally await.

LXI.

Thus would he talk, rapt with prophetic dream,
Breathing the spirit of the after-years,
And Athenäis heard each lofty theme
With doubting mind and with half-heedless ears;
Nor lov'd she much to find herself in spheres
Of thought which none she deem'd should dare to range:
For incredulity, which blights and sears
All hope in Heav'n's eternal law of change,
Made her distrust these dreams beneficent and strange.

LXII.

Yes! Athenäis, though she felt the sway
Of these conceptions, and their glorious scope,
Look'd wond'ringly on Bertrand, borne away
On the strong pinions of celestial hope.
How could she in this vision'd horoscope
The ordinance of human dest'nies trace?
How could her spirit with its strangeness cope,
Child as she was of that imperial race
Which deem'd that culture bloom'd for them in utmost [grace?

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LXIII.

The daughter of a past civility,
Of glories old and empires on the wane,
Must needs involuntary sceptic be
Unto this new world-dreamer, and his strain
Scantly would praise, while transient disdain
Would sometimes curl her lip or light her eye.
This would the Frank knight see with grief and pain,
And stay abash'd, and feel how slight a tie [high.
There was 'twixt him and her, and all he deem'd most

LXIV.

Yet once as he before her and her court
Had spoken as his wont, and was outcried
With jest, light argument, and gay retort,
Silent he sate, while round a ceaseless tide
Of airy babble ebb'd from side to side,—
When, looking up, her eye he sudden caught
Turn'd on him with sad smile; though swift aside
She turn'd a paler face, yet still he thought
A falling tear he saw—with marvel sore distraught.

LXV.

And sometimes he would mark with wonder strange
A ghastly look of horror and distress
Come o'er her features in an instant's change;
Her bloodless, speechless lips would quiv'ring press
Together, as if they would fain express
Some scathing sense of inward agonies.
Absorb'd and shrunk she seem'd in wretchedness,
Blank horror saw he in her wand'ring eyes,
As though some spectre dark she saw beside him rise.

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LXVI.

Thus doubt, fear, and surmise held him in thrall;
She was to him a holy mystery;
And as one list'ning by the outer wall
Of some high shrine of glorious minstrelsy
Wonders what magic light within may be,
So 'twas with Bertrand, till one fatal night
When he resolv'd to cope with destiny,
And passion rous'd to wild delirious height,
Writh'd in the burning bonds of its uncertain plight.

LXVII.

It was a night when in that island fair
There was a festival, such as men love
In softer climes to hold in outer air;
Bright lamps were shining amid bower and grove,
Whose iridescent beams together wove
A starry firmament of gem-like rays;
Within each plot of lawn and woody cove
Pavilions, grots, and temples were ablaze
With the soft light which fill'd all Pleasure's crowded maze.

LXVIII.

There maids engarlanded with rose and green,
And youths array'd in fair Arcadian dress,
Pass to and fro across the lamp-lit scene,
Save where enspher'd in love and loveliness,
Youth's darlings sat in some embower'd recess,
Resting awhile; while sound of harp, and lute,
And tabor stirr'd afar the throngèd press,
And to the soft note of the Lydian flute
The dancers floated light with softly-echoing foot.

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LXIX.

A thousand white-bloom'd forms of sovran grace
Bar'd their bright beauties to the perfum'd air;
Round arms and snowy shoulders flash'd apace
Within the flutt'ring dance; each maiden fair [hair.
Look'd like a queen with crown-like, pearl-wreath'd
Their fairy ankles glitter'd fast and free
As their light robes, wind-wafted, left them bare;
In every changeful motion one might see
Fond Nature's last sweet thought in moulded symmetry.

LXX.

Like clouds of butterflies which dance and swarm
O'er tulip beds, and rosy as the light
Of eve itself when summer days are warm,
These joyous creatures revell'd in the night:
And as in that fam'd city of delight,
Shadukiam, or as in orient dream
Of heav'nly glades, throng'd o'er by houris bright,
Through every nook did soft enchantment gleam,
Piercing the cedar's shade and fountain's diamond stream.

LXXI.

One light contagious ecstasy of joy
Possess'd all bosoms in the gleaming throng,
And eyes from eyes drank deep without alloy
Ambrosial sweetness—trembling lips grew strong,
And spoke the words the heart had spoken long;
Sighs of fond rapture fill'd the balmy breeze,
And laughter rang, and bursts of thrilling song,
From groups who sat beneath the cypress trees,
Or at the banquet board reclin'd in blithesome ease.

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LXXII.

For beneath tents and cupolas of gold
Sat banqueters in groups, and gaily pour'd
From ewers tall, clear sherbets, snowy-cold.
Fair-colour'd, frosted luxury crown'd the board:
Ic'd oranges, pomegranates ruby-cor'd,
And frozen creams on crystals pink and blue;
In osier'd gold were sunny peaches stor'd,
And amber wines, and rosy-tinted, threw
From out the lucid vase their effervescent hue.

LXXIII.

And Bertrand pass'd from crowd to crowd along,
And found no joy but in the eager quest
Of her, his passion's wonder, in the throng.
For she, 'twas said, and all her ladies, dress'd
In masqu'd attire or simple pastoral vest,
In garb Epirot or in Orient guise,
Mingled among the revellers; in jest
And merry laughter toying with surmise,
And mocking in feign'd voice, secure in their disguise.

LXXIV.

And all his soul was love-sick with desire;
The feverous joy of that bright festival
Fann'd to intenser heat the seething fire
Which from his heart crept o'er his senses all,
Inflam'd his burning cheek, swath'd each eyeball
In throbbing flame, and made his crispèd hair
With passion's restless heat to burn and crawl:
It was as though all Beauty's lustre there
For him alone possess'd a deadly, blighting glare.

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LXXV.

He sought, he ask'd, but none could tell him aught,
Till hope grew anguish, sickness, and despair;
Round many a cypress alley, bow'r, and grot,
He follow'd vainly many a phantom fair,
Drawn on by gesture, voice, or garb, or air,
Till undeceiv'd, in bitterness of mood
He rush'd with wild and frantic step elsewhere,
And some as idle phantasy pursued
Amid the madd'ning stir of that gay multitude.

LXXVI.

Now like the wild thoughts of a frantic brain
His rapid feet go wand'ring every way,
And tread the path they will re-tread again:
All desolate amid that tumult gay,
Alone he seem'd of all the bright array
To be for loveless isolation born:
Ever to be some false illusion's prey,
Ever to be uncherish'd and forlorn,
A creature born for loss, and mockery, and scorn.

LXXVII.

He knew it not, he knew it not each day
How sweetest thoughts had nurs'd his soul's disease
Unto this pitch of frenzy: as men say,
There is a honey cull'd by Phrygian bees
Sweeter than any on Hyblæan leas,
Which makes men on a sudden madly rave.
So he had sipp'd in soft voluptuous ease
Of Love's sweet philter till it did deprave
His reason, and it rav'd now like a maniac slave.

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LXXVIII.

Ah! why, ah! why had cruel chance combin'd
With every yearning of his craving heart
To ruin thus the fair peace of his mind?
Ah! why did Nature, Beauty, Grace, and Art
Contribute each their feather to the dart
Whose point was tipp'd with Love's worst poison flame,—
Why did they lend their tributary part,
So that this passion in his eyes became
The utmost sum and scope of noblest human aim?

LXXIX.

And thus there came a thought which was as gall
Unto his fever'd fancy; she—ah! she
Had seen him oft that eve, and she and all
Made merry with his heart's deep agony.
Was it not in his face for all to see,
Since haggard with despair his features grew?
And thus each sportive jest, all guileless glee,
The coy sweet glance each arch gay maiden threw,
Was to his wounded heart a source of pain anew.

LXXX.

While thus he wander'd, dizzy and distraught,
He held at length that scene of merriment
In weariness and horror, and he sought
His way from out the crowd, and as he went
He found embower'd in trees a faëry tent,
A bright pavilion, where he took a seat
Upon a fair divan; his brow he leant
Upon his hands; from burning head to feet [heat:
Throbbing with fierce unrest: then spoke thus in wild

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LXXXI.

"Ah! why alone from me of all the crowd
Does pleasure fly upon this festive night?
Oh mockery of life to me allow'd!
Oh that these eyes had never seen the light,
Or this soul ne'er been fram'd to feel delight
In all the True, the Beautiful, the Good,
The self-made thrall of each illusion bright!
O cruel Nature! who this frame endued
With thoughts or sense beyond the selfish and the rude.

LXXXII.

"Fancy! I count thee an accursèd thing,
Companion thou of sorrow's bitterest bane!
The vibrant nerve, the palpitating spring
Of sensibility to bliss and pain,
The rapturous sense of beauty, the disdain
Of all things base, the scorn of low desire,
Each is a link within the fatal chain
Which drags the fond slave to the martyr-pyre
At which his writhing soul must madden and expire.

LXXXIII.

"Fortune befriends the scheming and the vile,
She fills with joy the frivolous and gay,
But only he whose spirit without guile
Has nurs'd the warmth of each ideal ray,
And spurn'd each selfish thought like dross away,
He, only he, shall never once possess
His heart's desire, but ever be the prey
Of Desolation, and his heart's distress
Shall be a mock unto the sons of happiness.

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LXXXIV.

"Yes! I had faith in all things fair and good
E'en in my youth, and liv'd as in a dream.
Thus have I nurs'd within me the soft mood
Which led me on to Folly's wild extreme,
And ev'ry grace which seem'd a gift supreme
Of Heav'n has lur'd me to the fatal shoal
Where Life sinks without hope: each phantom gleam
Of Virtue led my visionary soul
Far from the beaten track and wrought me endless dole.

LXXXV.

"Oh, am I not true outcast from my kind,
Who have no kindred, who communion none,
Nor love, nor sweet-voic'd sympathy, can find,
Dreamer of moonbeams in the mid-day sun?
Away Illusions! henceforth I will shun
Your siren voices, and no more will chase
Your fond and fickle smiles. I will outrun
Each soulless minion in blind Fortune's chace,
And quench my soul's hot fire in Pleasure's deep em-[brace."

LXXXVI.

So rail'd he in vain words against his fate,
While from afar the music and the hum
Reach'd him, brain-wearied with his self-debate,
When dreamily did sounds of laughter come,
And louder grew with crash of horn and drum,
With cymbal clashes, shouts, and songs, and cries,
And a red glare of torches sudden swum
Out from the dark, and burst upon his eyes,
And in the light he saw a vision strange arise.

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LXXXVII.

They came, they came, a wondrous pageantry
All wildly dancing in the lurid flame.
Was it a dream or wild reality?
With myrtles crown'd, and ivy, on they came
With Corybantic clash, and wild acclaim
Of "Io Bacche," ever on they roll'd;
Behind a car, soft drawn by leopards tame,
Whereon young Bacchus, as in days of old [enfold.
Brandish'd the pine-con'd spear, which wreaths of vine

LXXXVIII.

Adown they came, beneath the alley tall
Of branchèd syc'mores. Satyrs with breasts bare,
Fawns cloth'd in fawn skin, Nymph and Bacchanal
With vine leaves wreath'd about their dusky hair,
And when within the torches' crimson glare
Count Bertrand sat reveal'd, that rabble rout
With cries triumphant rent the buxom air.
And as they throng'd that faëry kiosk about
One entering seiz'd his arm and tried to draw him out.

LXXXIX.

He rose in anger, but an Oread maid
Cast from her basket roses in his face.
And one, a veilèd Nymph, her fair hand laid
Upon his arm to lead him from the place;
But he disdainful stood a little space
Until soft lips in gentlest murmur spoke
His name, and then with swift malicious grace
Unveil'd an instant: like a lightning stroke
The vision of that face upon his senses broke.

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XC.

'Twas Athenäis! and ere Bertrand threw
Amazement off, the vision slipt away
And mingled with the crowd; then burst anew
The clash of cymbals and the madd'ning bray
Of trumpets, and that wild and mix'd array
Whirl'd onwards, till they left him there behind,
Perplex'd in soul and struck with pale dismay.
Was it the error of his heated mind [bin'd?
Which had the form ador'd with that strange rout com-

XCI.

For there were rumours of a sect abhorr'd,
Of unregenerate dwellers of that isle
Who still by stealth the Pagan Gods ador'd,
And held blasphemous revels, such erewhile
As heathens gross with lust, in licence vile,
Held unto Bacchus, Cybele, or Pan,
Or Paphian Aphrodite to beguile
Their sensual cravings; such strange rumours ran,
But who indeed could deem the Princess of that clan?

XCII.

His very heart wax'd chilly, faint and sick,
His brow and hair all clammy with the dew
Of agony; his breath grew hot and thick
With desperation's throes; he would pursue
Those revellers obscene, their crimes to view.
In all her loathsome beauty he would see
Her the abhorr'd amid that heathen crew,
And set his soul from hell's dominion free,
And stay with armèd hand their impious revelry.

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XCIII.

Deep in the wood's recesses in pursuit
He follow'd, on the track of sounds which aye
Receded from his ear, till sudden mute
The forward woodland grew; his breathless way
He follow'd, till at length a green sward lay
Silver'd with moonlight; in the central space
A temple glisten'd in the cold white ray;
Behind it rose a mountain's rugged face,
And barr'd all further way with its rock-bound embrace.

XCIV.

Yet more than earthly stillness seem'd to hold
The argent air. He seem'd, in truth, to hear
His very heart-throbs, and the turfy mould
To murmur as he stept. In moonlight clear
Rose the white temple, solemn and severe;
Nor ruin'd nor entire, but here and there
A column was o'erthrown; and chasms drear
Were rent within the cornice; everywhere
White light and purple shade slept tranquil, soft, and fair.

XCV.

In loftier majesty, as near he came,
The temple loom'd, and pour'd a solemn dread
From the dark spaces of its column'd frame.
Upon the steps he heard his lonely tread
Sound startlingly. Ah! where, indeed, had fled
Those heathen revellers? and left no trace,
Only the white owl circling overhead,
Darting from out the temple's inward space,
And leatherwingèd bats dash'd past his wistful face.

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XCVI.

The Doric columns, in their monstrous girth,
Would put to shame the gnarl'd oak's giant bole,
The growth of ages and the boast of earth.
Between their massy bases Bertrand stole,
Shrunk to the pigmy stature of a mole,
And reach'd the space within the mighty wall,
Where the high roof, through one vast craggy hole,
Let the white moonbeams in effulgence fall
Upon a statue rear'd on a tall pedestal.

XCVII.

The statue stood in its colossal grace,
A goddess form, and in that bosom bare
Of ripe voluptuous fullness; in the face
Of sensuous beauty, in the crispèd hair,
In her ambrosial, grand, and gorgeous air,
He knew the ancient goddess of the isle.
In her right hand a golden cup she bare—
The cup of Pleasure; and her look and smile
Had of Pandemian Love the full voluptuous wile.

XCVIII.

As Bertrand saw it in the pale moonbeam,
It struck him with a wild similitude:
The face, the air, the lip's triumphant gleam,
Seem'd like to Athenäis. Tranc'd he stood,
While all the habit of his servitude
Rush'd back upon him. "All things speak of her!"
He cried, and clasp'd his brow in frantic mood;
"The spirit of the past doth minister
Unto my grief, and all its sleeping anguish stir."

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XCIX.

His voice died in that marble solitude:
And looking round, he saw upon the right
An altar with dark spots, as though of blood;
And he discern'd thereon, with shudd'ring sight,
A sacrificial knife: a cold affright
Ran sudden through him, as his memory bore
His thoughts to tales of homicidal rite,
With which Astarte was ador'd of yore,
When blazing altar-pyres were fed with human gore.

C.

Yet, mock'd and baffled as he was, his brain
Made weary with his passion's bootless strife,
He felt a loathing and a fierce disdain
And hatred of the past. His heart was rife
With such self-scorn and madness, that the knife
He seiz'd and brandish'd, in his own dear heart
About to mar the very source of life—
When he awoke—leapt up with sudden start;
A touch, a fainting form made that foul dream depart.

CI.

For wild and weary Fancy, weird surmise,
Had made sport of his vex'd brain's fever-heat,
And o'er the darkness of unconscious eyes
Had rous'd that wild phantasmagoric cheat:
And now he knew, upleaping on his feet,
He had not left that fair pavilion'd place;
But, Oh, more strange than dream! there on his seat
Sat Athenäis in mute tearful grace,
And veiling with both hands her pale and perfect face.

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CII.

For Athenäis, she too fought in vain
Against the gilded bonds which made her state
A life of thraldom. Sorrow's bitter bane
Was in her daily cup. A power like Fate
In social organism incorporate,
Wrapt in a mystery of blood and gloom,
About her every motion lay in wait:
For then the sect Ismaelian did assume
To reign by stealth, and be the world's incarnate Doom.

CIII.

This was the sect which had no faith in God,
But deem'd a blind and brute Fatality
Rul'd o'er the nations with a blood-stain'd rod;
Which, by some cunning Infidel, might be
Directed as he would. In devilish glee
They swore brute pleasure was the highest good,
And in it used a godless liberty—
Bound by accursèd oaths to shed the blood,
Of all who marr'd the schemes of their dark brotherhood.

CIV.

Hassàn ben Sabah, the Sheik Aldjebel,
Was founder of this sect accurs'd and bad;
O'er Kousistàn, in Rudbar, did he dwell,
At Alamout his mountain seat he had.
From Haleb, from Damascus and Bagdad,
From farthest East, the choicest youths were wil'd
Off to his hold. Fanatic there and mad
Their passions grew, with Haschi's use defil'd,
Whence they Haschishin were, and thence Assassins styl'd.

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CV.

Gardens and halls voluptuous were plann'd,
Where Lust the neophyte enslav'd for aye,
The ruthless dagger of the Fedai band,
The crafty scheming of their chieftain grey,
Spread so their fell dominion day by day,
From Anatolia unto Turkistàn,
A hundred towns and castles own'd their sway;
Sworn too were many myriads of their clan
And to hold faith with them, and with no other man.

CVI.

The chieftain's word was law without appeal;
Whate'er he bade that swift would all fulfil;
In their own bosoms would men plunge the steel
At sign from him—if such his awful will
They father, brother, wife or child would kill.
Oft princes sitting on the judgment seat
Died by the poniards of these pow'rs of Ill.
No Sultan of the East possess'd retreat
To which the dark Fedai came not with stealthy feet.

CVII.

So foul a creed these villains did profess.
And of their ruthless policy the prey
Was Athenäis, the inheritress
Of claims imperial, which might lead a way
To bring Byzant's vast empire 'neath the sway
Of the Assassin chief: and thus they kept
Espial on her; secret eyes alway
Observ'd her with a zeal which never slept:
On her most secret ways suspicion's minions crept.

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CVIII.

And so these sons of Belial did o'erawe
Her bearing unto Bertrand, with dark threat
If she in any way o'erpass'd the law
Themselves prescrib'd. For so they hop'd to get
Him too entangled in the blood-stain'd net
Of their ambition. Oft at dead of night
A dewy horror would her cold brow wet,
As apparitions, robed in ghastly white,
Would speak in warning hoarse, and vanish from the sight.

CIX.

Thus many a night she pass'd in fearful awe,
And once she sudden woke unto a sound,
And in the dark a form obscure she saw.
She shriek'd aloud; her maidens flock'd around,
And by her pillow was a letter found
Wrapt round a dagger: "The Sheik Aldjebel
Greets Athenäis. Let thy will be bound
By ours. Take heed! hold thou the Frank by spell
Of Beauty, but no more, on pain of this. Farewell."

CX.

So liv'd she all enslav'd unto a dark
And merciless conspiracy, to mar
And brand all Beauty with the hellish mark
Of their dominion, and to blot each star
Of virtue from the world. No mortal bar
Was proof against them; for the proselyte
Wore not the livery of open war,
But walk'd disguis'd: thus an Assassin might
Be hidden in a friend, or slave, or parasite.

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CXI.

Their scheme it was to make the Princess wed
Some creature of their choice: they first had bound
A league with Bohemond,—but they had dread
Of his o'er-reaching cunning, and they found
That he, unknown to them, had dar'd propound
Th' alliance to Alexis, and they deem'd
He more than any could their plots confound,
Had he the power; and wiser then it seem'd
To try if better chance with others might be schem'd.

CXII.

And just as Bohemond's guilt they did detect,
Count Bertrand came; him hardly could they think
Ever to win unto their hateful sect,
Unless they let him linger on the brink
Of his felicity, that he might drink
So deep, perchance, of its bewild'ring flood,
That from their proffers vile he would not shrink.
In any wise, his presence here was good,
Since back in Antioch he might heal the Christian feud.

CXIII.

Thus Athenäis was constrain'd to aid
Their infamous designs, and did not break
Her close reserve,—in very truth afraid
That any trifling word which she might speak,
Might be occasion for those fiends to wreak
Some fell revenge: she never dar'd impart
Her grief to any: in endurance meek
She tried to practise a mechanic part,
And soften all she could with woman's gentle art.

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CXIV.

In her despair she let things run at will,
Until that festal eve; but when the glee
Began to rout the calm of twilight still,
A galley came from the Propontic sea
Bearing for her peremptory decree,
From the Imperial Court, that she should plight
Her troth to Bohemond, who soon would be
A suitor in the isle, no more she might
Possess in lonely state that island's dear delight.

CXV.

The mandate reach'd the Princess as she stood
Array'd for that gay revel, and she read
All in a breath the tidings, while her blood
Forsook her quiv'ring lips: she turn'd and fled
Forth from her maidens, and with rapid tread
Rush'd to her inmost chamber: there anew
She eyed the missive formal, cold, and dread.
Crush'd it in anguish, when it was read through,
And, like an adder, down the hateful parchment threw.

CXVI.

Oh, as a white dove gyved in fowler's snare,
Flutters against the springe which holds confin'd
Its rosy feet: thus, with her strong despair,
Her wild thoughts combated, and could not find
Deliv'rance. Through the palace of her mind
A thousand mem'ries cried and wail'd. "Ah! me.
O faëry home of fancy! which enshrin'd
My fair, free youth. Must I then part from thee,
To be the soulless slave of hateful policy?"

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CXVII.

For aye with loathing, and with dark affright,
She thought on Bohemond. The Frank appear'd
Within his Norman nature to unite
All that she most despis'd, and shunn'd, and fear'd—
A huge barbarian greed, all thin veneer'd
With culture feign'd, and courtesy untrue,
A lawless conscience, which unceasing veer'd
Just as the wind of self-advantage blew;
His sordid ends through her she felt he would pursue.

CXVIII.

What marvel if her fancy turn'd to one
Whose heart well'd forth upon his voice's tone,
In whose clear eyes the light of candour shone?
Ah, now she felt how pleasantly had flown
That time—the dearest she had ever known—
When his fair spirit its rich treasures laid
Before her feet. The splendour of a throne
And Oriental pomp were worthless, weigh'd
Beside the living worth in which he was array'd.

CXIX.

Rooted she stood, indrawn in deep surmise.
Then sudden she resolv'd to go straightway
And with this Frank knight speak in close disguise.
The swift thought enter'd as a single ray
Of light into her dark and drear dismay.
Quickly she call'd Ayesha to her side,
And bade the maid exchange her trappings gay,
With her, to pass into the festal tide,
Which round the palace walls was shimm'ring far and wide.

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CXX.

Through the bright crowd they went in random way,
And many a tip-toe reveller drew nigh
To the masqu'd beauties, giving challenge gay.
But neither made to any a reply,
But swept with hastier footstep mutely by,
Until one masquer, for a lowlier maid
Mistook the Princess: from his gallantry
She stept among the trees, and breathless stray'd
By that pavilion where Bertrand retreat had made.

CXXI.

On the divan he lay at length diffus'd,
Wrapt in unquiet slumber, a dim gleam
Was from a chainèd cresset soft suffus'd
Upon his brow and eyelids: as the dream
Sent through his brain its wild, phantasmal stream,
She heard him utter wildly her own name;
Then, as she leant above him, a dim steam
Of sudden tears upon her vision came,
She sat down by his side upon the couch's frame.

CXXII.

Then, as a rose toss'd by a summer wind
This way and that will waver till o'erblown,
So hung she wav'ring, till at length resign'd
Unto the sudden impulse, she leant down,
And kiss'd the sleeper's brow; but swift o'erthrown
Herself with surg'd emotion, faint she grew—
Her nerves no longer bore her; her light moan
Uprous'd the dreamer, and a death-like hue
Stole crimson from her lips, and round her eyes was blue.

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CXXIII.

For all the frozen fountains of the soul,
    Which false convention and a formal life
Had prison'd in their sources, burst control,
    And rush'd into her being; the wild strife
    Of elemental storm with passion rife
Warr'd in her brain, and panted in her breast;
    And love smote on her heart as with a knife
Of sudden fury—like a traitor guest
Who has in strange disguise been honour'd and caress'd.

CXXIV.

And when the storm roll'd back its darkling tide,
    She rais'd her head, and look'd with tearful sight
On Bertrand, kneeling meekly by her side.
    Then o'er her tearful aspect, like sunlight
    On dew-bedabbled flowers, a smile was bright;
And she held forth her hand, which Bertrand laid
    On his hot brow, and in a calm delight
They look'd upon each other, half afraid
To break the vision's charm awhile they silent stay'd.

CXXV.

Afar the flutes breath'd sweet, the cymbals clash'd,
    And amorous lutes were plaintive everywhere.
Beneath the cedar-boughs the fire-flies flash'd,
    And faint sweet perfumes fill'd the swooning air,
    From jasmine and from roses twining fair,
About the marble columns—while they twain,
    Drinking each other's looks, sat silent there:
As sweet and strange as rest in fever pain,
The light of their sweet smiles fell on the weary brain.

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CXXVI.

The incontaminable stars burn not
With purer light than mingled in their eyes;
The time, the place, and self were all forgot
In the charm'd music of their scarce-drawn sighs.
And when in murmur'd utterance and replies
They broke the silence, and the trembling tongue
Told the dear secrets of love's long disguise,
In passion's pride and ecstasy they hung
Fond look on look more fond than poet ever sung.

CXXVII.

"Do I still dream?" said Bertrand, "can this be?
O Heav'n, with thy grace help me to contain
My heart before the shrin'd reality
Of all my vision'd yearnings! Oh, sustain
My spirit on these heights! Let not in vain
My feet have climb'd up from the mists below!
Keep pure my crown'd Ideal! Let no stain
Come on its royal robes! Aye on its brow
Let Purity, a star unclouded, beam as now.

CXXVIII.

"Oh! surely when from Time's murk void abysm,
Twin spirits leap upon Love's stainless height,
The viewless angels with anointing chrism,
Do sanctify their triumph and delight.
Oh pray then, dearest, that thy smile may light
Me aye to serve both Heav'n and men through thee:
Then of thy sacred past the glories bright,
Within the virgin West renew'd shall be,
And consecrate our love with new divinity!"

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CXXIX.

"Dear life," she said, "my robe's imperial fold
Is all too scant for love's munificence,
Poor as my purples, poor my sceptr'd gold,
To wear as queen of thy inheritance.
The very world's face alter'd to my sense
Since first I saw thy Glory, spirit-eyed:
Yet rais'd by love to worthier competence,
I'll sit among the nations by thy side
In thy transfig'ring soul new-born and glorified.

CXXX.

"But yet, oh yet, while now we dream on life,
With glory new and kindred grace endued,
The present round us is with horror rife."
Swiftly she told him how she was pursued
By those assassin miscreants, and shew'd
The tenor of Alexis' stern decree;
And then devising much, it seem'd they could
Make good some way for her afar to flee
Unto some Western court, till Christ's tomb was set free.

CXXXI.

And as the violet, which untimely drought
Has wither'd, can regain its purple hue
Within the show'r, so Athenäis caught
Fresh radiance from the sweet ethereal dew
Of Hope within her senses; and they two
Sat tranc'd in their own glory and sweet youth,
Held by the charm which is for ever new,—
The charm of Beauty, Innocence, and Truth,—
Pulsing in twofold Joy, and Sympathy, and Ruth.

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CXXXII.

Insatiate, sweet satiety, but dream
Of Fancy, ah! too often dream'd in vain,
When life with life first flows in mingled stream,
And the man feels within his heart and brain
The woman's radiant nature, and her vein
Doth beat with his in mystic unity.
Illumination through the sense made plain
Of Beauty's inmost pow'r, which then doth free
The spirit from its net of harsh mortality.

CXXXIII.

Why from the happy dost thou haste away,
O Time! but with the agonizèd heart
Doth linger ruthless? Wilt thou never stay
And take of Love's sweet triumph ling'ring part?
And yet count throb by throb each pang and smart
Of pain and anguish? Thus that gentle pair
Felt each swift moment like a wingèd dart
Fly past them, while afar the troubled air
Seem'd to urge time along with all the rapture there.

CXXXIV.

But hark! swift cries of terror, shrieks of death,
And furious shouting o'er the revel flew;
And where they sat, those two with holden breath
Listen'd the while the uproar fiercer grew.
The Princess turn'd a face of whiten'd hue
All wond'ringly on Bertrand, who upstood
And by the hand the trembling lady drew
Unto a knoll which rose above the wood,
And thence they saw the cause of all that turmoil rude.

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CXXXV.

Hither and thither in confusion wide
The festal crowd was flying all about,
Like flocks of doves who sudden have espied
The fowlers in their midst; and through the rout
Drove troops of turban'd ravagers, whose shout
With answering screams in horrid discord clash;
And flying robes were seen, arms wild thrown out
From struggling forms, and scimitars whose flash
Upon the blood-stain'd earth did many a reveller dash.

CXXXVI.

And Athenäis look'd and saw her guard
Resisted not the Moslem—some e'en took
Their part in rapt and murder—some kept ward
Round groups of captive women. Swift there shook
A gleam across the sky; they turn'd to look,
And saw in flames the palace burst and roll:
The windows belch'd forth fiery tongues which strook
On dome and pinnacle, and soon the whole
Of all that faëry realm writh'd like a burning scroll.

CXXXVII.

All blanch'd and crisp'd with terror—all aghast—
Fair Athenäis saw her dear world go
In ruin from her sight, and clasp'd more fast
The hand of Bertrand with convulsive throe.
Sudden from out the madd'ning roar below
She heard a shriek, and as she turn'd her head
She saw Ayesha flying from a foe:
She knew the man, 'twas he she most did dread,
'Twas Moseilama, he, the Armenian renegade.

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CXXXVIII.

Ah! then the hideous truth all plainly grew:
These fierce marauders, who had found a way
Unto her isle, were of the Assassin crew,
Who would the Princess captive bear away;
Their ships had sighted just at close of day
The Cypriote coast, and to the mountain hold
At Alamout they sought to bear their prey,
And her hir'd soldiers, long corrupt with gold
Their fëalty and her to these dark men had sold.

CXXXIX.

In hurried whisper and low undertone
Did these two lovers then take counsel meet,
And they determin'd swiftly and alone
To fare that night unto some far retreat
Among the mountains, where some shepherd's seat
Might hide them, till a way might be combin'd,
To send some tidings to the Frankish fleet,
Or whence by night down gliding they might find
A boat upon the shore, and fly with fav'ring wind.

CXL.

Away! away! beneath the twofold shade
Of night and woods, and with the guiding ray
Of one fair star their mountain flight to aid,
Through vistas dark, o'er forest grassy way;
Afar from distant farm, the watch-dogs bay,
And here and there some forest thing took flight
Before their step. The leaves in whispers play,
As oft they pause in silence on some height,
And see the palace scale the sky with flick'ring light.

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CXLI.

How could she choose but weep her faëry halls,
Thus pillag'd, burnt, dissolv'd unto the wind?
The orient columns and the jasper walls,
The records of each fair ethereal mind,
The soul's best gems, the glory of mankind,
Endear'd by youth's fond love and memories fair,
All, all were gone: in bitterness she twin'd
Her fingers in her loose dishevell'd hair,
And call'd for Heav'n's revenge upon those miscreants [there.

CXLII.

Shudd'ring she turn'd her tearful eyes away,
And rested them on Bertrand; whence she drew
Such liquid tenderness, that when he lay
His hand in hers, and when he spoke, she knew
That in his love were stor'd up treasures new,
Which should make good the olden—and she flung
Her arms about his neck, and there she grew,
While her wild streaming hair about her hung,
Till from their trancèd state their spirits found a tongue.

CXLIII.

Again, again they tread the forest maze,
And she on him her failing strength would lean
On rock-strewn paths and root-begnarlèd ways,
And then they reach'd a glen o'er whose ravine
The sombre pine shot frequent up between
The rugged rocks: in it they rested not,
Till the red dawn woke nature's slumb'ring green:
Then in the hills they reach a lawny spot,
Where by a mountain stream was built a shepherd's cot.

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CXLIV.

A faithful shepherd own'd this mountain nest,
And with an only son kept there his sheep.
These blithely tender'd to each noble guest
Such succour as they could; one on the steep
Of rocks above the cabin watch would keep
Adown the gorge, and one would seek the bay
And parley with the farers of the deep,
To find some bark to steal his hosts away,
And bring of their fell foes some tidings day by day.

CXLV.

Three days they pass'd within that nook conceal'd,
And yet in spite of peril, not the less
Felt they the bliss of life to life reveal'd;
It seem'd beneath the weight of their distress
More lofty leapt the fount of happiness:
Beyond the world's rough rumour and control,
Communion in that Alpine wilderness
Made the floodgates of self wide open roll,
And all the tides of life rush mingling in the soul.

CXLVI.

Like some high symphony by master wrought,
Where passion's music doth transcend the sense
Of speech, in which the visionary thought
All blindly swims in ecstasy intense,
So they enspher'd in harmony immense,
Drank of fresh Being's sinless purity,
Of life and death the mystery and defence,
Like spirits risen to th' eternal sea
And floating in first joy of Immortality.

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CXLVII.

Alas! that souls should rise to starry height
And fall like eagles stricken in mid air,
That lips with Heav'n's ambrosial nectar bright
Must drink the dregs and wormwood of despair:
That comet-like life must more madly tear
Around its central glory to the dark;
Thus felt they when that shepherd came not there
On the third eve—when e'en the mountain lark [spark.
Was hous'd in nest and keen shone forth the glowworm's

CXLVIII.

For aye they lov'd that shepherd's honest face
And bright grey eye, who ever came at e'en
With cheerful tidings to their hiding-place;
And deep disquiet seiz'd them. Had he been
Entrapp'd by those foul miscreants—had his mien
And searchings caught suspicion's eye and ear?
That eve all anxiously they pac'd the green
Before the cabin, pausing oft to hear
And watch if from the dark some comer might appear.

CXLIX.

The Princess pass'd the wakeful night in fear,—
She had foreboding deep of danger nigh;
And from her cheek would Bertrand drink the tear,
And kiss her brow, and chide the weary sigh:
And sweet it seem'd 'twould be to both to die.
They would have done with time: what could it bring
To them perchance but wrong and cruelty?
How could they die, when death would have less sting,
And life stand free for flight with more unfetter'd wing?

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CL.

They heard afar the torrent from the rock,
Along the glen they heard the night-wind sigh,
The lone faint bleating of the shepherd's flock,
From the cliff scar they heard the owlet cry,
As Night with all her stars went gliding by;
And still they ponder'd on their lone distress,
How could they hope from those dark foes to fly?
With claspèd hand, and many a dear caress,
They reckon'd up the sum of their lorn helplessness.

CLI.

And yet, a little ere the dawn of day,
O'er the worn lady's eyes would slumber creep.
By Bertrand's side within that hut she lay,
Sway'd on the billows of unquiet sleep,
Like some white swan on the long-rolling deep
Of ocean after storm. Her languid head
Lay couch'd upon his arm, when with a leap
Rose Bertrand up, and Athenäis spread
Her arms to hold him fast in her awak'ning dread.

CLII.

And nearer, nearer steps came to the door,
As Bertrand, with drawn sword, the entrance fac'd,
The Princess would have thrown her form before
As shield against his danger, but her waist
His left arm grasp'd, and held it fast embrac'd;
Then wildly dash'd within a turban'd crew.
The first man for his headlong, heedless haste,
Aton'd with chest and lung deep smitten through;
A second and a third his blade swift-circling slew.

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CLIII.

But vainly his outnumber'd sword he plies:
One prick'd him on the forehead with a spear,
So that the salt blood stream'd into his eyes.
Half-blinded, not the less he smiteth sheer
Another turban through; when with a jeer,
Ere his good sword could get to guard again,
With scimitar, one slash'd him o'er the ear.
He fell with darkness simmering in his brain:
O'er him the Princess sank, as though by sorrow slain.

CLIV.

Yet Bertrand died not then; when shatter'd thought
Return'd, 'twas eve, and he was on the sea.
He mov'd his dizzy head with pain distraught:
A maiden pillow'd him upon her knee.
On her grey eyes he look'd all wond'ringly,
And sought within her sweet and mournful smile.
He knew her, sure. Ayesha—could it be?
Yet she it was; who, with her earnest wile,
Had won his nurse to be among those miscreants vile.

CLV.

He would perforce look out across the flood;
A galley near sail'd by in faster flight,
And on the poop a dark form low'ring stood,
And near it some fair woman rob'd in white.
She spread out wide across the black'ning night
Fond yearning arms. His senses fail'd anew—
It was the Princess in that miscreant's might.
Then darkness thick o'er all the ocean grew,
And all alone next morn his galley forwards flew.

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CLVI.

And if he never won his peerless bride,
    And never heard the victor anthem swell
Within the city where his Saviour died,
    Not him the first or last hard chance befel.
    Too often have such spirits known the hell
Of failure of high aims, and life most drear
    In bondage vile, for us to sound the knell
Of hopes high-hearted brought to ruin here,
And challenge for his fate the unavailing tear.

CLVII.

Thus leave we Valour and Romance and Truth
    Sunder'd from Beauty, Art, and high emprise:
Too often thus the poesy of youth,
    Enthrall'd by man and fortune, pines and dies,
    Yet not the less each noble spirit tries
To weave for Beauty some new diadem.
    The lowliest hand may reach some pebbled prize,
Which happier art may grave into a gem,
And place within the shrine of New Hierusalem.

END OF CANTO VI.

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